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**A Study of External Intervention and School Improvement in
Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances**

by

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis contains my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another University. In accordance with Senate resolution 4.6 this thesis does contain published work that has appeared in print before the thesis was completed or examined.

Abstract

Central Government has identified a group of schools deemed to be '*Schools facing Challenging Circumstances*'. These schools tend to be low attaining schools that serve socio-economically deprived communities. A range of policy initiatives have resulted in a number of centrally driven interventions aimed at improving these schools. This thesis focuses on the relationship between external intervention and school improvement in schools facing challenging circumstances. The research strategy consisted of three phases, combining case study and survey approaches to explore two examples of centrally driven external intervention. Phases one and two adopted a case study approach to explore OfSTED inspection and the Schools facing Challenging Circumstances Initiative as mechanisms for improvement, while phase three consisted of a survey to triangulate data and explore some general questions pertaining to external interventions. Thus, this research adopted a mixed methods approach collecting interview, questionnaire and documentary evidence from a range of sources and perspectives. The findings are based on data collected from interviews with over 150 teachers in 21 schools and survey data collected from a further 94 teachers in 6 schools facing challenging circumstances in one LEA. This is the first study to explore the relationship between external intervention and school improvement in this particularly challenging group of schools. The findings suggest that if widespread reform is to be achieved a more sophisticated approach to external intervention must be developed. Rather than treating these schools as a homogeneous group, interventions must be differentiated to match individual school cultures, capacity for change and development phase. In conclusion, a typology of schools facing challenging circumstances is presented. It is argued that this typology can inform our thinking to support more sophisticated approaches to intervening and improving these schools.

Abbreviations

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DES	Department for Education and Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAZ	Education Action Zone
EiC	Excellence in Cities
EWO	Educational Welfare Officer
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector(ate)
HRS	High Reliability Schools
ICSEI	International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement
ICT	Information Communication Technology
INSET	In-service training
IQEA	Improving the Quality of Education for All
ISIP	International School Improvement Project
LEA	Local Education Authority
LIG	Leadership Incentive Grant
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education
RAP	Raising Achievement Plan
SDP	School development Plan
SfCC	School facing Challenging Circumstances
SMT	Senior Management Team
TES	Times Educational Supplement
VEAZ	Virtual Education Action Zone

Chapter one

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, educational researchers have turned their expertise and attention to 'low attaining', 'low performing', 'challenging', 'failing' or 'ineffective' schools (e.g Stoll and Mayers, 1998; Barth, Haycock, Jackson, Mora, Ruiz, Robinson, and Watkins, 1999; Leithwood and Steinbach, 2002; Boreman, Rachuba, Datnow, Alberg, MacIver, and Stringfield, 2000). However, robust models or approaches to improving these schools remain in relatively short supply. As Gray (2001, p. 33) concedes:

we don't really know how much more difficult it is for schools serving disadvantaged communities to improve because much of the improvement research has ignored this dimension- that it is more difficult, however, seems unquestionable.

The reason for this lack of attention possibly resides in the inherent sensitivity and the complexity of the terrain. It seems that the school effectiveness and school improvement research traditions have tended to focus, quite understandably, upon the characteristics of schools that are most effective (Sammons, 2000) and are improving (Hopkins, 2001a). By default these schools

are less likely to be those in deprived areas or schools that are located in areas of high social and economic disadvantage. The net result of this is that the improvement models and approaches that we have are premised on a set of contextual conditions that are simply absent in schools in difficult circumstances. How far therefore, we have an adequate understanding of the improvement approaches required for schools existing in difficult contexts remains questionable.

This paucity of evidence has resulted in an increasing focus on the improvement of the lowest attaining schools within our educational system. Interest in these schools ranges from attempting to generate and sustain improvement in those that are poorly performing to an urgent need to secure ways of raising student achievement in schools located in areas of higher than average socio-economic deprivation. An example of the concerted effort being made to raise the academic outcomes of low attaining schools is the creation of a group of schools identified by the DfES as 'schools facing challenging circumstances'. This group of schools exhibits low attainment and tends to serve socio-economically disadvantaged communities (Reynolds, Potter, Hopkins and Chapman, 2001). The fact that effective schools can and do exist in challenging contexts (National Commission on Education, 1996) would suggest that improvement is possible for SfCC but as noted earlier little is known about how to improve these schools and more importantly how to sustain their improvements over time.

1.2 Focus of thesis

The focus of this thesis is the relationship between external intervention and the improvement of schools facing challenging circumstances. The thesis draws on the key constructs of pressure and support, locus of control and the role of context to explore the nature of external intervention and school improvement efforts in SfCCs. It focuses on two examples of external intervention experienced by SfCCs in an attempt to provide an overview of these interventions. The research consists of three phases. The first phase (of the research) investigates OfSTED inspection as a form of external intervention and its impact on SfCC. The second phase of research examines the 'SfCC initiative' as a form of intervention underpinned by high levels of support and school based autonomy. The third phase of the research explores the findings from a survey of teachers' perceptions of OfSTED inspection, the SfCC initiative and external school improvement interventions. The two overarching research questions within this research are:

- *How do teachers working in schools facing challenging circumstances perceive external interventions?*
- *What forms of external intervention are most likely to generate school improvement in schools facing challenging circumstances?*

To explore these questions the research has drawn on interview data from over 150 teachers in 20 schools and questionnaire data from a further 94 teachers from another 6 schools.

1.3 Structure of thesis

The thesis is structured in nine chapters. The introduction to the thesis forms the first chapter. Chapters two and three consider the literature and locate this thesis within the traditions of the school effectiveness and improvement movements. Chapter two charts the evolution of school effectiveness and school improvement research, drawing on seminal works that have demonstrated (i) that schools can make a difference to educational outcomes and (ii) the associated processes necessary to make such a difference. Chapter three focuses in on the small but expanding literature pertaining to the improvement of schools facing challenging circumstances. How literature highlights the difficulties and likely solutions to improving SfCCs is considered particular attention being paid to the nature of interventions that have emerged and the factors considered to be important in improving SfCCs.

Chapters four and five outline the methods used in this research. Chapter four focuses on the theoretical aspects of methodology including differences between qualitative and quantitative data and considers issues of reliability, validity and generalisability. Chapter five details the methods used to undertake the research covering aspects including identification, selection of schools and data collection and analysis.

Chapters six, seven and eight report the findings of each phase of the research. Chapter six considers the key themes emerging from the analysis of the OfSTED data in phase one of the research. Chapter seven reports the key themes and six vignettes from the SfCC initiative data collected during phase two and chapter eight reports the findings from the survey conducted in phase three.

Chapter nine draws on the findings from the research to discuss the possibilities of adopting a more sophisticated approach to the improvement of SfCCs. In conclusion a typology of improving SfCCs is presented which suggests the need for more context-specific approaches to external intervention in SfCC.

Chapter two

Introducing the field: School Effectiveness and School Improvement

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to locate this thesis within a conceptual and theoretical framework provided by the fields of school effectiveness (SE) and school improvement (SI). This chapter seeks to outline the key developments in the knowledge base pertaining to SfCC from the SE and SI research fields. This chapter is structured into six sections:

- section one serves as an introduction to the current socio-political climate by describing the context within which this research has been undertaken;
- section two describes the development of SE research;
- section three presents the evolution of SI research and practice;
- section four outlines examples of SI programmes;
- section five highlights some on-going themes and tensions within the field;
- section six summarises the key points raised within the chapter.

2.1.1 Context

In the United Kingdom, in recent years there has been growing interest in the performance of public sector services. In health and education, successive government departments have focused on introducing policies aimed at delivering better public services. At one level, reforms have led to an *'audit*

society' (Power, 1994) and within the education system include legislating for regular inspections, league tables and setting and reviewing performance targets. These policies have led to the implementation of mechanisms that have increasingly held public services more accountable for their performance through a combination of pressure and support. The dichotomy of left and right has become outmoded, leading to a situation where all parties are striving to deliver an agenda centred on social justice, through provision of high quality public services within a context of low taxation and a free market economy. Historically, political arguments have tended to focus on the level of taxation and whether money should be invested in public services rather than what these services should actually provide. Now arguments have moved on to discuss issues of delivery underpinned by the concepts of 'value for money' and 'quality of service'.

During the past decade the international context has also changed. First, ever-increasing globalization continues to reinforce the need to be increasingly competitive in economic terms within a global rather than regional (e.g. European) or local (e.g. English) market. Therefore, nations need a set of public services that can support a highly competitive economy. This is dependent on creating and maintaining a healthy, highly educated workforce with a flexible skill base that can compete within a global market (Barber, 1996). Therefore, it is in the best interests of the population of this country to have high quality public services.

The relationship between globalization and education may be clearer than with other public services. It appears that international competition is present for jobs at all levels within society. More highly paid professional jobs provide increased mobility and the opportunity for work on the global scene and thus, competition for work within a global context (Giddens, 1999). At another level, relatively low skilled jobs may also face international competition. The cost of labour is an important factor here as it is difficult for developed countries to compete with a less developed country in terms of workforce costs, for example, telephone call centres serving the UK network are now being situated in India. Previously, this type of centre would have been situated in a UK city and individuals would have competed to work there from within that city. Now the individual has lost the chance of a job not through local, or in this case regional, but global competition. Therefore, our workforce must be highly educated and adaptive in order to be economically successful at the individual level. It could be argued that only if we are successful at the individual level will we be competitive at the global level. Thus, the performance of our public sector and especially, our schools is central to the success of our economy in a globalized society

It is not coincidence that schools can be viewed as central to the success of the economy and indeed the country and also that school effectiveness research is arguably the most highly developed discipline within academic public sector research. Policy makers have taken the findings of SE research and used them to inform (Teddle and Reynolds, 2000) or manipulate (Thrupp, 2001a)

government policy. Whether school effectiveness research findings have been used to improve or hinder schools remains unclear and a highly contested area.

SE researchers have tended to focus on exploring differences between more or less effective schools from a positivist perspective. The research methodology has often involved quantitative measurement of a range of parameters associated with educational performance, attempting to assess the size of school effects (e.g. Gray, 1981; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, and Ouston, 1979; Tymms, 1992). A second common feature of effectiveness studies has been to identify characteristics exhibited by more effective schools (Purkey and Smith, 1983; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore and Ouston, 1979; Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore, 1995). As knowledge base at the school level has increased, researchers have focused on several aspects of effectiveness including the quantification of school effects for different groups of pupils and the stability of school effects over time (e.g. Smith and Tomlinson, 1989; Nuttall, Goldstein, Prosser and Rasbash, 1989). More recently, researchers have investigated the differential effectiveness of departments (e.g. Harris, Jamieson and Russ, 1995; Sammons, Thomas and Mortimore, 1997) and contemporary research in this field has taken the classroom level as the unit of analysis choosing to focus on teacher effectiveness (e.g Muijs and Reynolds, 2002).

In parallel to the development of SE research a second approach to considering school performance has developed. SI research and practice has evolved with,

until recently, little communication between proponents of the different educational theories. Thus, over time, two distinct movements within this field of educational research and ideology have grown. Although intrinsically related, they clearly have their own histories and traditions.

In contrast to SE research the SI movement has tended to consider schools as social organizations while enquiring into the processes associated with improvement. The successful implementation of change has underpinned much of the work in this area. The methodologies relied upon to achieve these aims have been largely qualitative, often using case studies to illustrate initiatives that have worked at a particular level within a specific school rather than generating large data sets as in SE research.

Since the early 1990s, it has been accepted that there has been a convergence of the two movements. Many improvement interventions have taken strengths from both areas and fused them into what could be argued is a stronger, new research and development tool. The aim of the next section is to analyse the growth and development of each research tradition in an attempt to provide a contextual background to the literature for this thesis.

2.2 School effectiveness research

2.2.1 The school effectiveness movement: An introduction

Teddlie and Reynolds, (2000) suggest that SE research can be sub-divided into three branches:

- **school effects research**

Which investigates the ability of schools to affect the outcomes of the students they serve

- **effective schools research**

Which investigates the processes associated with effective schools

- **school improvement research**

Which focuses on the processes involved in school change.

For the purposes of this chapter SE research is taken to include school effects research and effective schools research and SI research is given separate treatment in the following section. Both the SE and SI movements are explored by considering their development over the past fifty years. Treatment through this historical lens exposes their developments over time, relative strengths and weaknesses and highlights their growing interconnectedness.

2.2.2 What is school effectiveness?

A commonly used definition of SE is that an effective school is “*one in which pupils progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake*” (Mortimore, 1991, p. 9). Therefore it could be said that the school adds ‘value’ to its students, because they perform better than would be expected when compared to students in other schools, after variations in intake have been taken into account. Stoll and Fink (1996) define effectiveness in more detail, importantly including the word *all* into their definition, so distinguishing between schools that are only selectively effective and those that are effective for all. They state that a school is effective if it:

- Promotes progress for all pupils beyond what would be expected, given consideration of initial attainment and background factors
- Ensures that each pupil achieves the highest standards possible
- Enhances all aspects of pupil achievement and development
- Continues to improve from year to year

(Stoll and Fink, *ibid.*, p. 28)

These four points combine to give a more holistic picture of an effective school, but the definition remains limited, especially when applying the criteria to judge whether a school is effective. The strength of the definition is also paradoxically its weakness. If each and every pupil, and all aspects of achievement and development are considered, there will be individual failures; therefore the school

is not being effective for all pupils. Also, an effective school may not perform consistently year after year, as shown by Nuttall and colleagues (1989). If one believes improvement to be a journey, there will inevitably be poorer years, meandering years, or years of consolidation, but the long-term trend may still be that of sustained improvement.

2.2.3 A history of school effectiveness research

In terms of academic discipline, SE research has a relatively short history, being about thirty-five years old in the USA and under thirty years old in the United Kingdom. As Hopkins (2001a) notes:

Up until quite recently the ability of schools to make a difference to student learning was widely doubted.

(Hopkins, *ibid.*, p. 43)

Thus, it is helpful to consider the development of SE from a historical perspective with a focus on the early defining studies. If one considers the climate of the time and the focus of study, the general history of the movement's development can be divided into four broad overlapping phases during the past fifty years: 1960-70s; 70-80s; 80-90s and 90-00s.

The origins of school effectiveness research can be traced back to the 1960s in the USA where the very earliest studies were intended to prove or disprove a

beneficial effect of schools and teaching on student achievement (Gage, 1966, cited in Creemers, 1994). Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld & York (1966) produced the defining work “*Equality of Educational Opportunity*”. This publication has often been cited as the study responsible for the initiation of school effectiveness research in the USA (Teddle and Reynolds, 2000). The report posed four key questions:

- What is the extent of segregation between different racial and ethnic groups?
- Do schools offer equal educational opportunity in terms of a number of criteria regarded as good indicators of educational quality?
- How much do students learn, as measured by their performance in standardised achievement tests?
- Is it possible to discern associations between student achievement and the kind of schools they attend?

In order to explore these questions the research team surveyed twenty thousand teachers in 4000 elementary and high schools throughout the United States and administered standard achievement tests, aimed at assessing students’ verbal and non-verbal skills. The report concluded that:

schools bring little influence to bear on a child’s achievement that is independent of his [sic] background and general social context; and that this very lack of an independent effect means that the

inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighbourhood and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school.

(Coleman *et al.*, 1966, p. 325)

Regression analysis suggested that the prime determinant of a pupil's academic success was his or her socio-economic background, and therefore the common assumption of the time became that schools could do very little to impact on student outcomes as academic achievement appeared to be predetermined by factors external to the schools control. Thus, this report provided pessimistic reading for those involved in education, especially affecting the morale of teachers. However, while this report attracted attention for its findings there has also been criticism of the methodology used. Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) highlight methodological issues pertaining to this study, including:

- The use of a narrow range of variables that could not measure the true effect of the school. Coleman *et al.*, (1996, p. 324) conceded the attitudinal variables that were included (e.g. control of environment, interest in learning) "*depend more on home than the school*".
- Mixing the 'unit of analysis' has been a general issue for school effectiveness research. Coleman *et al.*, (1966) mixed levels of aggregation between the school and individual level. This can lead to underestimating

the effect of any input (Glasman and Binianimov, 1981 cited in Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000).

- The use of verbal achievement as the outcome variable. Madaus *et al.*, 1979 cited in Teddlie and Reynolds, (2000) have argued that this type of standardized test is less sensitive to differences in school characteristics than specific curriculum tests.

Notwithstanding these difficulties further studies in the USA, for example that by Jencks and colleagues (Jencks, Smith, Ackland, Bane, Cohen, Gintis, Heyns and Micholson, 1972), which reanalyzed the Coleman *et al.*, (1966) data, also supported the initial findings, thus adding credibility to the assertion that schools can make little difference to students' learning and therefore do not really matter.

In Britain the Department for Education and Science published the Plowden Report (DES, 1967). These findings from the study '*Children and their Primary Schools*' reported on the extent to which parents influence their children's achievement at school. The sample was stratified by size and type of school, using a total of one hundred and three junior, junior-mixed and infant schools, containing a total of about three thousand children. Mothers of children (and sometimes fathers) at the sample schools were interviewed. Interestingly, the study reports a 95% response rate to the request for an interview by the researcher, which would be unusual by today's standards. Information about organisation, staffing and academic testing was also collected from the schools.

Results from the survey investigating the effect of parental influence on student achievement can be seen in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Percentage contribution of parental attitudes, home circumstances and state of school to variation in educational performance

	Variation in performance within schools	Variation in performance between schools
Parental attitudes	20%	28%
Home conditions	9%	20%
State of school	17%	17%
Unexplained	54%	35%

Parental attitudes were assessed by responses to questions during interview. Examples of questions asked include ‘What age do you want your child to leave school?’ and ‘What is your preferred secondary school?’

Home conditions were judged by factors such as physical amenities in the home, parental income and occupation, family size and parental background. State of

school was measured by school organisation, student groupings, experience of staff and official HMI reports of quality of school and teaching. Unexplained variation included differences between students that had not been covered by the survey's variables. Errors in measurement were also included in this definition. The characteristics used to judge parental attitudes, home circumstances and state of school were very crude. Educational performance was measured using a reading comprehension test (for a more comprehensive methods of assessment see Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis & Ecob, (1988)).

If the values for parental attitudes and home conditions are added together to provide a value for home, or external factors, within schools, the value accounted for 29% of variation in student educational performance and the state of school accounted for 17% with over half the variation being left unexplained (54%). However, when the variation between schools is examined, almost half (48%) can be accounted for by the combination of home factors, and only 17% by schools. Unexplained variation still account for over a third (35%) of student variation in educational performance.

The report concluded that the school had only a *small influence* on the educational performance compared to the contribution of parental attitudes and home conditions. Other British studies in this era also supported conclusions from the Plowden Report that educational outcomes were largely predetermined by background factors and consequently schools made little difference to

students' lives. This led to a widespread belief that schools could only have a marginal influence on academic outcomes. The evidence of the time appeared conclusive. Reynolds (1992) holds the findings from these early studies partially responsible for the creation of a professional research climate that was particularly hostile to the early work of school effectiveness researchers until into the 1980s. Reynolds (1992) also cites four other factors that may have contributed to this situation:

- Difficulty in gaining research access into schools
- Absence of reliable measures of institutional climate
- Popularity in Britain of the view that schools are only a reflection of wider society
- The intellectual preconceptions of traditional British educational research, using sociological explanations for children's 'educability'

In 1976, the Labour Prime Minister, James Callaghan, addressed Ruskin College, Oxford on the issue of education (Barber, 1996). He outlined the challenge for education by continually demanding a rise in standards and greater accountability within schools. It could be argued that this speech initiated the modern education debate in Britain, and was the precursor to the birth of the British school effectiveness research movement.

Rutter *et al.*, (1979) published the '*Fifteen Thousand Hours' Study*' (so-called because this is the time a child spends at school from the age of five until school leaving) which attempted to relate various internal school factors with school effectiveness in secondary schools. This was measured using four pupil outcomes: attendance, behaviour in school, delinquency (i.e. officially cautioned or found guilty of an offence in a Juvenile Court) and academic attainment. Reporting on the size of school effects, Rutter *et al.*, (*ibid.*) concluded that after accounting for intake characteristics:

students at the most successful secondary school got four times as many passes on average than those at the least successful school.
(Rutter *et al.*, *ibid.*, p. 19)

Rutter and colleagues (*ibid.*) also identified a number of common factors associated with more and less successful schools in the study. This work seriously challenged the assumption that children's education is predetermined by background factors. These are summarized overleaf in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. Examples of factors associated/not associated with an effective school

Internal factors associated with effective schools	Internal factors not associated with effective schools
Balance of intellectually able/ less able students in school	Balance of ethnic groups
Physical environment	Balance of behaviour
Reward system	Class size
Use of homework	School size
Positions of responsibility for students within the school	Age and physical characteristics of buildings
Strong leadership combined with democratic decision-making	
Teacher operating as a role model	

(adapted from Rutter *et al.*, 1979)

Some of the above factors appear obviously related to effective schooling. For example, it is easy to envisage the benefits of regular homework on academic attainment. However, the inclusion of some of the other factors in this table would appear surprising, for instance, the association between the balance of

intellectual ability and school effectiveness. The implication of this observation is that in a classroom where some students are academically successful, they will achieve examination success and thus act as examples to less academically able classmates. Conversely, if nobody in the class is passing examinations and succeeding, the general impression among pupils will be that they are not achieving anything useful at school. It is interesting to note that ethnic mix and behavioural mix were not found to be associated with school effectiveness in this study. Likewise, class size did not seem to have an effect on whether a school is seen as effective. However, in Rutter and colleagues' (1979) study, there was a small range of class sizes, varying from twenty two to thirty pupils.

Schools found to be generally effective showed similar benefits across the whole range of student outcomes, rather than in only one or a few areas, suggesting a complex link between factors. Despite using a cohort design that matched individual pupil data at intake to school and at the age of sixteen, the study was harshly criticised (Goldstein, 1980). This may have been reinforced by the prevailing socio-political climate that remained pessimistic in terms of the extent that schools could make a difference to student outcomes. A major criticism levied by Cuttance (1982) was the attempt to generalize the findings. His criticisms focused on the size and nature of the sample. The study involved only twelve schools, and two thousand pupils. The London inner-city schools picked were also not representative of the wider population of secondary schools found in England. In addition, a further weakness of the study was that only academic

outcome (examination results) was used to assess effectiveness. The remaining three outcomes focused on the non-cognitive development of students. However, for the first time in the United Kingdom a major study had indicated that schools could make a difference to student learning outcomes.

Following the work of Rutter *et al.*, (1979) other effectiveness studies were undertaken that reported similar conclusions pertaining to the size of school effects (e.g. Gray, 1981) while others focused on factors associated with effective schooling. These studies often involved collecting a large range of data on such subjects as stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes to school, organisational factors, and resource levels of the schools. The results from these studies suggested that there were a number of factors associated with more effective schools, including positive academic expectations and high levels of student involvement (Reynolds, 1976, 1982). These early studies were highly criticised and many comments were passed concerning their flawed methodologies. For example, Reynolds' (1976 and 1982) research did not involve matched studies, but used group-based, cross-sectional data on intakes and outcomes.

In response to methodological critiques SE researchers worked to develop more sophisticated methodologies including the development of multilevel statistical analysis. This new wave of studies was led by Aitkin and Longford's (1986) re-analysis of John Gray's (1981) data that used multilevel modeling for the first time in the estimation of school effects. Two of the most important studies in

Britain were by Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis and Ecob, (1988), and Smith and Tomlinson (1989). Mortimore and his colleagues from the Institute of Education in London used fifty randomly selected London primary schools from a total of over six hundred and fifty. This sample of schools was later found to be representative of schools throughout London. They traced the progress of two thousand pupils over a four-year period. The effectiveness of the schools was assessed on a very wide range of outcomes, including academic achievement in mathematics, reading and writing, and non-academic achievement in terms of attendance, behaviour and attitude to school. In their findings, they reported a number of schools that were effective academically and socially. These schools possessed the following characteristics:

- Purposeful leadership of staff by the head teacher;
- The involvement of the deputy head;
- The involvement of teachers;
- Consistency among teachers;
- Structured sessions;
- Intellectually challenging teaching;
- Work centred environment;
- Limited focus within sessions;
- Maximum communication between teachers and students;
- Record keeping;
- Parental involvement;

- Positive climate;

It was also concluded that compared to background factors the school was four times more important in accounting for pupil progress in reading and ten times more important in mathematics (Moretimore *et al.*, 1988).

Smith and Tomlinson (1989) reported variations in effectiveness between eighteen comprehensive secondary schools in the United Kingdom. For some groups of students, the variation between individuals in different schools accounted for a quarter of the total variation in examination results. They also reported differential effectiveness: out of eighteen schools, the school ranked most effective for mathematics was ranked only fifteenth most effective for English attainment, after allowance for intake differences. Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) summarise the general findings from this study as:

- The overall per cent of variance in achievement predictable at the school level was around 10 per cent across all tests, ability groups and ethnic groups;
- The effect of the school varied by ability level of students, with the effect being less for average ability students;
- There was a variation in the effects of different departments;

- There was a small differential school effect for students from different ethnic groups.

(adapted from Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000, p. 87)

The 1992 Education (Schools) Act can be considered important for two reasons. Firstly, it gave the government the power to enforce the publication of performance tables of schools' academic performance, leading to the media ranking our schools in crude league tables. Second, it is responsible for the introduction of the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED). The criteria used by OfSTED to judge the effectiveness and quality of schooling can be traced back directly to early studies that characterized elements of effective schooling. More recently, in their review of school effectiveness in the United Kingdom, Reynolds, Sammons, Stoll, Barber and Hillman (1996) have distilled the key characteristics of effective schools into nine concise points. These have also been woven into the inspection regime (OfSTED, 2000) and incorporated into wider government policy agendas.

The use of crude examination results to rank schools combined with an inspection system underpinned by 'key characteristics' may have acted as the catalyst for some researchers within the field to develop more sophisticated mechanisms to examine school effectiveness. Fitz-Gibbon and her colleagues have invested much time and energy in this area. They have developed systems based on the concept of 'value added' (see Fitz-Gibbon, 1992; 1995; 1997). In an

attempt to move beyond the school level other researchers have been keen to explore different levels of analysis. Harris, Jamieson & Russ, (1995) and Sammons, Thomas & Mortimore (1997) have characterized common traits of more effective departments, while more recently Muijs and Reynolds (2001) have examined teacher effects within the classroom.

2.2.4 School effectiveness: A summary

Throughout its relatively short history school effectiveness research has made a number of positive contributions to the academic literature. The evolution of more sophisticated methodologies has enhanced the quality of research in this area and led to more complex conceptualizations of the relationships between factors associated with school effectiveness. In summary, to date, school effectiveness research has made progress in four main areas by demonstrating that:

- schools can and do make some difference to pupil's academic outcomes;
- there are key characteristics associated with more effective schools, departments and teachers;
- schools exhibit differential effectiveness. That is, the size of effect can vary over time, between departments, teachers and groups of pupils;
- alternatives to crude scores may provide a more complete picture when attempting to measure school performance.

The next section outlines the important developments within the school improvement movement.

2.3 The evolution of school improvement research and practice

2.3.1 The school improvement movement: An introduction

School improvement research and practice is concerned with making schools 'better' places for students, teachers and the wider community. Research in this area has tended to focus on small-scale qualitative case studies (Reynolds *et al.*, 1996) while school improvement practice has tended to rely on the engagement of teachers through CPD. This approach has often drawn on the principles of enquiry and reflection to support teachers to experiment with their practice by engaging in action research orientated investigations (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994).

2.3.2 What is school improvement?

The term school improvement is commonly used in two ways. It can be used as a common sense term to describe efforts made to make schools better places for students or it can be used in a more technical sense to describe the processes that contribute to raising student achievement (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994). Definitions relating to school improvement have evolved to indicate an increased focus on student achievement and capacity building. For example, in the 1980's the International School Improvement Project (ISIP) defined school improvement as:

a systemic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions, and other related internal conditions, in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively.

(van Velzen, Miles, Ekholm, Hameyer & Robin, 1985, p. 48)

By the mid 1990's Hopkins *et al.*, (1994) had drawn on their experiences of researching on and working with schools to develop this definition further. They consider school improvement as:

a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change. In this sense school improvement is about raising student achievement through focusing on the teaching and learning processes and the conditions that support it. It is about strategies for improving the school's capacity for providing quality education in times of change, rather than blindly accepting the edicts of centralized policies and striving to implement these directives uncritically.

(Hopkins *et al.*, 1994, p. 3)

The principles of improving student outcomes by attempting to develop organizational culture and capacity have become central to the efforts of

contemporary school improvement research and practice (Barth, 1990; MacBeath, 1996 and 1999; Brighouse, 2000; Clarke, 2000; Harris, 2002). In addition, (and in many cases in contrast to the school effectiveness movement) the school improvement movement has argued that improvement and the capacity to improve come from within rather than beyond organizations. Therefore, proponents of school improvement have tended to view improvement as a bottom up rather than top down approach to change, thus putting students and teachers at the core of improvement efforts (eg. Fullan, 1991; Hopkins, *et al.*, 1994). Increased weighting on student outcomes and capacity building espoused by Hopkins *et al.*, (1994) have ensured continued commitment to this definition. It continues to be widely used both within the field and by policy makers almost a decade after its introduction to the literature.

2.3.3 A history of school improvement research and practice

In common with school effectiveness if we are to understand the strengths and weaknesses of school improvement it is helpful to consider the historical developments of the movement. Fullan (1991) has identified several temporal phases in this process of educational change, starting with the general provision of new teaching materials in the 1960s, a failure in their implementation initially, then success, and finally a phase he termed 'intensification versus restructuring'. Subsequently, Hopkins *et al.*, (1994) adapted these four phases in order to discuss them in a British context.

Fullan (1991) argues the first phase of school improvement was initiated in the mid 1960s by the '*space race*'. This resulted in intense competition between the Eastern bloc and Western nations to be the first to put a man into space. Governments of the time recognised the necessity to generate powerful economies underpinned by successful education systems. Therefore, policy-makers invested large sums of money to provide curriculum materials for all schools in an attempt to improve educational standards, particularly in scientific subjects. The curriculum materials were of high quality, being developed by academics including educationalists and psychologists. However, as Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) reflect, they failed to impact on teaching and learning because teachers were excluded from the process. In addition in-service training that accompanied the new curricula was often under-developed. Consequently, curriculum innovation was subverted. A success of this period was that teachers were made aware of the importance of good resources, and used portions of the material that they considered to be of value, incorporating them into their own teaching.

The second phase, '*documenting failure*' lasted for most of the 1970s. Central to this period was the increasing acceptance that externally imposed '*top-down*' models of change did not work and that in-service training needed to focus on developing knowledge and skills of teachers. The complexities of implementation also came to the fore, as it became more widely understood that implementation

did not occur spontaneously as a result of central reforms. (Teddle and Reynolds, 2000).

The third phase that Hopkins *et al.*, (1994) describe is the period of success lasted from the late 1970s to the mid 1980s. It was during this period that major large-scale studies of school improvement took place, such as *'Improving Secondary Schools'* (Hargreaves, 1984). The Committee on the Curriculum and Organisation of Secondary Schools was set up to examine evidence and investigate practice in Inner London Education Authority secondary schools, and to make recommendations to the chief inspector. The work was detailed and varied, focusing on raising achievement of 'working class' pupils through school improvement. Examples of good practice were written up into case studies, for example, The Linking Scheme at Quinton Kynaston school. This project began when the school became co-educational in 1976, in order to form links with three local primary schools. Previously the intake of pupils had been from up to seventy different schools. The case study describes the benefits of the initiative as: increased curriculum links with link schools; substantial gains in teacher awareness of the need for continuity, achieved by careful cross-planning for transition and induction; and the benefits of sharing resources. Three years of research on the development indicated high levels of student satisfaction with the move from primary to secondary education. The case study also describes problems acting as barriers to development, and their possible solutions, thereby being of practical use to other schools wishing to implement a similar initiative.

Many similar projects were also in progress around this time, often in the form of case studies, and together their results were used to develop further strategies for school improvement. An important example of this genre of work is the International School Improvement Project (ISIP), a large-scale study that ran between 1982 and 1986. The ISIP was an initiative run by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation for the Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The project included one hundred and forty people from fourteen different countries. The focus of the group was to share and develop understanding of what makes school improvement work, at a greater level than any one country could manage without collaboration. Their work utilised cross-sectional study in specific areas such as principles and internal change, agents in the school improvement process and conceptual mapping of school improvement. In some member countries there were internal ISIP programmes. Different groups kept in contact through general conferences and the ISIP newsletter. Publications were managed by the General Editorial Board, and included works such as 'Making School Improvement Work', a conceptual guide to practice (van Velzen *et al.*, 1985), and regular publication of technical reports from the project, for example, 'School-based Review for School Improvement' (Hopkins, 1985). This latter document attempted to create a standardised definition of, and describe the process of, school-based review. It analyses thirty-six national school-based review projects, generating a series of critical policy

and technical issues. Finally, Hopkins discusses the problems and limitations of school-based review, before proposing a future research agenda for the subject.

The fourth and latest phase that Hopkins *et al.*, (1994) document is that of managing change. Hopkins and colleagues argue that schools have to learn how to filter, react and deal with high levels of change implemented at a rapid pace. However, this change is occurring within the context that there is an acceptance that change is a process rather than a one-off event (Fullan, 1991) and that local variables can influence and dictate whether attempts at change succeed or fail. Researchers have stated that this is the most challenging phase in the history of school improvement to date (Hopkins, *et al.*, 1994; Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000). A key challenge is to use the body of knowledge that has developed in an intelligent way so that practitioners can, firstly, access it, and secondly, use it to develop improvement strategies that fit their context. This must be achieved within an ever-changing policy context where multiple central government reforms and initiatives compete for every school's internal resource.

2.3.4 School improvement research and practice: A summary

School improvement research and practice has evolved during the latter part of the twentieth century. There have been a number of phases within its development that have hindered and or accelerated the process of improving schools. The increased knowledge and understanding gained from research and development programmes has supported the development of increasingly

sophisticated attempts to improve schools. However, the findings from school effectiveness research or school improvement research alone appear to provide limited help in terms of improving schools.

The following section describes the contemporary merger of the movements and argues that only a combination of these two paradigms will deliver the desired improvements to our schools. Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) argue the result of the merged perspective have led to the development of '*third wave*' school improvement. The following section also outlines examples of programmes that exhibit characteristics of third wave school improvement.

2.4 Effectiveness and improvement in action: Towards third wave improvement

The previous two sections have charted the histories of school effectiveness and school improvement. Their separate traditions are summarized overleaf (table 2.3):

Table 2.3 The separate traditions of school effectiveness and school improvement.

School effectiveness	School improvement
1 Focus on schools	Focus on teachers
2 Focus on organization	Focus on school processes
3 Data-driven, with the emphasis on outcomes	Empirical evaluation of effects of changes
4 Quantitative in orientation	Qualitative in orientation
5 Lack of knowledge about how to implement change strategies	Exclusively concerned with change in schools
6 More concerned with change in pupil outcomes	More concerned with journey of school improvement than its destination
7 More concerned with schools at one point in time	More concerned with schools as changing
8 Based on research knowledge	Focused on practitioner knowledge

(Reynolds *et al.*, 1996)

This section draws on recent literature that argues for the merger of the two movements. It is argued that the historically separate traditions of school

effectiveness and school improvement are outdated and therefore researchers within each tradition have needed each other in order to move the field forward (Reynolds, Hopkins and Stoll, 1993; Gray, Reynolds, Fitz-Gibbon and Jesson, 1996). This has contributed to the evolution of a new genre of studies and projects that exhibit properties of both traditions.

Since 1996 an increasing number of research projects have taken aspects of the school effectiveness and school improvement movements to create a new wave of research and development activity. A more pragmatic approach to researching schools within the field has evolved. It could be argued that several factors have been instrumental in this evolution. First, within the field there has been a desire to develop more rigorous and insightful methodologies. Researchers located within the school effectiveness movement have been keen to move on and ask questions relating to how and why, rather than purely focusing their attention on '*effect size*' or '*correlates of effectiveness*'. This has resulted in the development of more complex studies combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches (see section 2.4.3). Second, researchers within the school improvement field have attempted to develop higher levels of generalisability within their research. This has necessitated taking elements of the effectiveness tradition and incorporating them into their philosophy and practice. Third, external funding agencies have propagated this situation by demanding robust findings with high levels of generalisability that also give detailed insights into the processes, principles and strategies needed in order to implement and sustain improvement.

Thus, more recent research projects have tended not to focus on elements located in one tradition or the other, but have attempted to combine them, thus producing project and outcomes that serve both the effectiveness and improvement communities. This is evidenced in the nature of collaborations both within and between university departments (Gray, Hopkins, Reynolds, Wilcox, Farrell and Jesson, 1999; Harris, Muijs, Chapman, Stoll and Russ, 2003). The school effectiveness and improvement fields are now moving closer towards a mixed 'mixed traditions' approach within the field. Researchers are becoming more sophisticated in this new approach, constantly developing innovative methodologies that challenge current assumptions and conceptualizations of research projects (Gray *et al.*, 1999; Day, 2003; McMahan, Thomas, Smith, Stoll, Bolam and Wallace, 2003).

2.4.1 Third wave school improvement

Third wave school improvement aims to build on the merged perspectives of the effectiveness and improvement communities by focusing on reforms that address teaching and learning and also address capacity building issues at the school level within a framework of external support (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001). In addition Hopkins and Reynolds (*ibid.*) argue the need to continue working on

building mechanisms for:

- collecting high quality data from schools, and feed findings from this data back into the system;
- drawing on knowledge from other fields within the social sciences and beyond;
- developing systems that regularly audit schools to permit the development of context specific interventions;
- developing further insights in classroom processes.

However, while third wave improvement appears to offer an attractive direction for many policy makers (Hopkins, 2001a; Barber, 2003) its success must be judged empirically in terms of whether it can contribute to improve schools in a range of contexts. If this is not investigated, an opportunity may be missed and we will once again be faced with guessing at what works rather than being in the position to make decisions or develop interventions based on empirically grounded principles. The following sub-section outlines examples of projects that have incorporated some elements of third wave improvement into their design.

2.4.2 Towards third wave improvement

There have been a number of developmental projects that have successfully combined elements from the effectiveness and improvement movements. Two

early examples of these are the Halton Effective Schools Project in Ontario, Canada and the Schools Make a Difference project in Hammersmith and Fullam, England.

The Halton board of education is located thirty miles from Toronto, Ontario, and serves forty four thousand students in sixty-six elementary schools and seventeen secondary schools. The Halton Effective Schools Project began in 1986 and involved all schools within the district. The aim of this initiative was to:

*enhance the quality of the system and schools' performance
through the application of the characteristics of effective schools.*

(Stoll & Fink, 1996, p. 14)

The programme was underpinned by Fullan's principle (1982, p. 41) that "*change is a process, not an event*". Therefore there was to be no searching for instant solutions, and the project was planned for a five-year timescale. Each school received a small input of resource that they could use as they saw fit to support their development.

A task force was set up with the responsibility of guiding the initiative. Initially the task force went into schools and 'taught' twelve characteristics of effective schools (after Mortimore *et al*, 1988). Unsurprisingly, this top-down approach

failed because awareness of the characteristics did not mean that staff would focus their efforts on exhibiting them.

The next effort was less prescriptive in nature, with researchers working in collaboration with each school to develop an individual school growth plan. The plan involved an initial assessment of the school's current performance, the development of school improvement targets and implementation strategies, and a built-in method for monitoring progress. The initial assessment was obtained through the use of teacher, student and parent questionnaires (an approach that has subsequently been extended by the Three Questionnaires Project (Robertson & MacBeath, 1999). The school growth plan was piloted in nine schools during the first year; in year two another twenty-five were added.

This project has combined the principles of both school effectiveness and school improvement movements: the school growth plan arose from the school improvement paradigm, while the school effectiveness element to the project came from the assessment and evaluation phase, when the school obtained a 'picture' of its initial starting point in the programme, thus allowing for the recognition and celebration of success, and planning for future improvement. Both areas contributed principles and ideas (Rutter *et al.*, 1979; Fullan, 1991), which were used in a complementary fashion, with the focus on '*what will make the programme work*', rather than perpetuating the historical divisions. The initiative remains on going. However, due to the lack of focus on quantitative

outcome measures there is little evidence to support gains in pupil achievement but system-wide improvements in motivation in staff and in schools' capability to develop strategic plans have been reported (Potter, Reynolds and Chapman, 2002).

The Schools Make a Difference Project was an LEA based project that ran between 1993 and 1995 in Hammersmith and Fulham. All eight secondary schools in the borough were "*self selected*" (Barber and Dann, 1996, p. 194). The aim of the project was to raise attainment, participation and motivation of pupils within the LEA.

A strong management structure was created to guide the project. A steering group composed of stakeholders at all levels (except students) provided an overview of the project and within each school a (paid) project co-ordinator was appointed. Each school received additional resources. £28,000 was provided as a one-off payment designated for capital costs and an equivalent amount each year for developmental activities (Barber and Dann, 1996).

The project was underpinned by the characteristics of more effective schools that were promoted at INSET activities. The schools selected their own areas for development. Internally the programme was led by a co-ordinator group supported by the principal within a strong framework for evaluation. School based activities included lengthening the school day, creating revision centres during

school holidays, providing a mentoring service for management teams and consultations with pupils.

It is reported that although commitment to this project was high the project had variable impact in schools (Myers, 1995; Barber and Dann, 1996). It is perceived to have been more successful in strongly managed schools but in weak schools the benefits were believed to have fallen away (Potter *et al.*, 2002).

2.4.3 Third wave school improvement in practice

The previous section has considered two projects that have managed to incorporate elements of third wave improvement into their design. This section focuses on two contemporary '*third wave*' improvement programmes (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001). Arguably, these programmes demonstrate the most advanced thinking and practice in terms of school improvement in the UK. They also appear to have proved popular with teachers, schools and policy makers. The evidence to support this comes from firstly, the fact that an increasing number of schools are taking part in these programmes and secondly, that central government has taken both programmes (or elements of them) and implemented them in highly resourced, high profile interventions (eg. Schools facing Extremely Challenging Circumstances Project (Reynolds, Harris and Clarke, 2004)). This section outlines the characteristics of each programme in order to highlight key principles associated with improvement in SfCC that will be explored in Chapter three.

The first programme, '*High Reliability Schools*' or HRS is underpinned by the school effectiveness principles and has been adopted from an American Programme of the same name, while the second, Improving the Quality of Education for All was developed by a team of academics interested in school improvement at the University of Cambridge in 1986. Each programme is underpinned by a limited, albeit growing empirical base to support their claims of success (see Stringfield, 1995 Reynolds and Stringfield, 1996; Hopkins *et al.*, 1994; Hopkins, 2001a).

The High Reliability Schools project has been running in geographical clusters in the England and Wales since 1995. There are approximately twenty-five secondary schools involved and a growing number of primary schools within two of the three clusters. There is also one on-going cluster in the USA that predates the UK programme (Stringfield, 1995). The aim of the HRS programme is to raise the achievement of all pupils (Potter *et al.*, 2002). The underpinning principles of the programme have been adopted from organizational characteristics of high reliability organizations including air traffic control centres. Within such settings the concept of failure is considered to be so catastrophic that it must be avoided at all costs. Therefore, 'fail safe' systems and procedures prevail and override less reliable aspects of organizational structures and behaviors. HRS translate this philosophy into a school setting. Schools involved with the project adhere to

nine core principles:

- Goal clarity- focus on small number of goals;
- Consistent best practice- based on standard operating systems;
- Systems for identifying flaws in the above practices- and changing them;
- Proactive recruitment, training and retraining;
- Mutual monitoring of staff, without loss of autonomy and confidence;
- Data richness- analyses of performance at all levels;
- Early intervention to prevent cascading error;
- Hierarchically structured within a collegial framework;
- Equipment and environment maintained in the highest order.

As part of the programme all schools receive INSET pertaining to school and teacher effectiveness. Clusters and schools appoint co-ordinators to manage and deliver collaborative training. All schools must include raising GCSE attainment and attendance as two of their key goals. External support for the clusters is reduced as schools become more familiar with the programme.

Claims have been made that this programme can stimulate school improvement across many school settings:

Evidence of student gain is strong; gain scores at GCSE are well above the national gain. Gains are found equally across a wide

variety of prior attainment and SES: in high-, medium- and low attaining schools, in high and low SES areas... Lack of evidence as to whether gains are sustained.

(Potter *et al.*, 2002, p. 255)

However, the evidence supporting these claims results largely from early internal evaluations. Other researchers have argued there is less evidence to support these claims (Harris, 2000) and more recent internal analyses of the project also suggests variable outcomes from schools within the programme (Reynolds, Stringfield and Muijs, forthcoming).

The IQEA project began in 1991 with nine schools in East Anglia, North London and Yorkshire. By 2003 it had grown to involve over fifty schools in twelve local education authorities around the country and has been exported abroad to locations as diverse as Hong Kong and Scandinavia. IQEA has two core aims. The first relates to developing a model of school development underpinned by empirical evidence and the second is to improve schools by developing and spreading good practice. Hopkins *et al.*, (1994) state the overall aim is to:

produce and evaluate a model for school development and a programme of support that strengthen a school's ability to provide high-quality education for all pupils by building on existing good practice'

(Hopkins *et al*, 1994, p. 7)

Hopkins and colleagues move on to describe their programme as:

A collaborative enterprise designed to strengthen their ability to manage change, to enhance the work of teachers, and ultimately to improve the outcomes, however, broadly defined, of students

Hopkins *et al.*, 1994, pp. 100-101)

As Stoll (1996) notes, for a school to be involved with the programme all staff must agree that the school will be involved and at least 40% must receive release time to conduct IQEA activity. Each school can select its own priorities for development, and its own methods for achieving these priorities, thus increasing ownership over the change process (Fullan, 1991). The school must also agree to participate in the evaluation of the programme and to share the project findings. In practice, the programme works at three levels, first, at the individual classroom level where teachers (and in some cases students) work on developing their practices through classroom based research including action enquiry (see Elliott, 1991; Hopkins, 2000). Second, at the whole school level where a cross hierarchical group (cadre or school improvement group (SIG)) is formed to lead and coordinate the programme. Third, individual schools do not work in isolation. There is an emphasis on school to school co-operation and collaboration.

All schools within the project form part of a network. The size of networks varies from those containing only a few schools to those where all secondary schools in an LEA are involved. Teachers from the cadre groups meet at residential and twilight sessions to share their learning and explore future possibilities. The three levels of development are underpinned by support from external (usually but not exclusively University based) consultants. The role of this external support is to provide critical friendship to the school. This external perspective is viewed as an important part of the process, providing challenge and support within a trusting relationship independent of local educational authorities or central government agencies. The external consultant is also a resource that the schools can draw upon. They may be expected to provide up-to-date knowledge of developments in the fields of effectiveness and improvement.

Reynolds *et al.*, (1996, p. 146) suggest the most important finding from IQEA is that school improvement works best when a clear and practical focus for development is linked to simultaneous work on the internal conditions within the school. These efforts seem to exhibit three elements:

- reconstructing externally-imposed change in the form of school priorities;
- creating internal conditions that will sustain and manage change in schools;
- embedding these priorities within one overall strategy.

Sharnbrook Upper School in Bedfordshire has encapsulated some of the above ideas into their IQEA model. Initially the school focused their energies on structures that supported learning (for example the school library, management of coursework, study skill, etc.). As involvement with the project has progressed, their focus has moved (a) into the classroom to investigate the dynamics of learning and teaching within their context, and (b) to the macro level of the school as a learning organisation, where all staff are valued, challenged and developed as much as possible. Many case studies are available that chart the success of IQEA as a catalyst for school improvement (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994; Hopkins, 2000; 2001a) and a recent evaluation by the University of Leicester (2002) supports much of the self documented evidence. However, linking the programme directly to gains in student scores remains elusive. According to Potter *et al.*, (2002, p. 254) there is *"No evidence of differential pupil score gain"*. However, Potter and colleagues (2002) concede this is *"not the aim of the project"* and also note that there is: *"no baselining of the cohort nor control group"* but the programme *"Claims establishment of conditions for improvement"*. Therefore, the nature of the data collected by the project appears to prevent direct links being made between the programme and student outcomes thus, even if there were a link, current methods of evaluation would be unlikely to identify any links in this area. It would seem to link a school's participation in either IQEA or the HRS programmes to student gains remains a problematic and challenging task.

2.5 Key themes and emerging tensions within third wave improvement programmes

The evidence suggests that third wave developmental projects have improved their robustness by combining elements of both the effectiveness and improvement traditions. Projects rooted in the school improvement paradigm have benefited from the use of school effectiveness knowledge and collection of quantitative data to evaluate and develop the structure and content of programmes. Conversely, those rooted in the school effectiveness paradigm have attempted to pay more attention to the processes associated with improvement by developing qualitative methodologies to support their development. While it is noted that there are variations between HRS and IQEA particularly in their origins and associated histories. It is also clear they share some key principles of improvement including:

- An enhanced focus upon student outcomes. Rather than focusing on change at the school level efforts tend to focus on making changes that affect student outcomes;
- An increased focus on generating change at multiple levels. Levers for improvement are pulled at the school, departmental and increasingly the classroom level;

- Best practice and research findings have been shared through collaborative patterns of staff development. This has taken the form of groups of teachers enquiring into their practice within schools and development of networks to share information between schools;
- Capacity building for the short, medium and longer term has come to the fore. This includes not only staff development but strategic planning (eg. Planning for replacement of teachers, (including anticipation of promotion within and beyond the school) by sharing roles and responsibilities within the school and developing leadership at all levels.) and the use of external appropriate agencies;
- There has been an adoption of a mixed methodological orientation. Qualitative and quantitative data are used to judge educational quality, and variation in quality;
- There is an increased understanding of the importance of reliability or fidelity of implementation within programmes;
- The importance of sustaining improvement has become paramount. It has become accepted that changing cultures through vision building and adapting structures is important in achieving sustainability;
- There has also been an increased effort to ensure that improvement programmes relate to and impact upon teachers and students through training, coaching and mentoring programmes.

(adapted from Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001)

However, the evolution of this genre of programme has also raised some issues and tensions. Despite the rhetoric calling for synergy (Stoll and Fink, 1996) or the merging of traditions (Gray *et al.*, 1996; Reynolds *et al.*, 1996), in practice school effectiveness and improvement appear to remain uneasy partners. The nature of developmental activity can be considered as either '*mechanistic*' or '*organic*' (Harris, 2000). The emphasis of the type of development or the balance between mechanistic and organic development can be traced back to the programmes' philosophical and ideological roots. Those programmes located mainly within the effectiveness tradition tend to be more mechanistic in nature and those located within the improvement tradition tend to be more organic in nature. This applies to HRS and IQEA and has implications for the development of hybrid effectiveness/improvement programmes.

Tensions relating to a programme's origin can emerge at both project and school level. (Chapman, 2003). For example incorporating taught modules focusing on '*models of effective teaching*' into a programme historically located in the school improvement tradition could be viewed as a valuable addition at a theoretical level and characteristic of a third wave project. However, in practice, at the practical level it can be problematic. Within the context of high levels of pressure for raising student achievement both philosophical and practical tensions may arise. At a philosophical level school improvement projects such as '*Improving the Quality of Education for All*' have focused on improvement through empowerment of teachers via enquiry-based practice. To impose 'known' to be

effective models of teaching within such programmes can rest uneasily within their core philosophy, spirit and purpose. However, at a practical level schools have become sensitized into receiving information through CPD rather than developing their own mechanisms for developing models of good practice through CPD. Conversely, it could be speculated that other projects rooted in the effectiveness tradition, such as HRS may encounter similar tensions if they attempted to incorporate more organic developmental activities. At a theoretical level philosophical tensions appear to exist while at a practical level a tension between dependency and empowerment is evident.

This chapter would be incomplete if it focused only on the positive dimensions of school effectiveness and school improvement. Recently there have been criticisms raised pertaining to methodology, to the nature of schooling, the concept of effectiveness and the relationship between the field, policy makers and central government (e.g. Slee, Wiener and Tomlinson, 1998). Others have been less grounded, tending to focus on attacking individuals (e.g. Thrupp, 1999, pp. 160-199). This has resulted in a number of critiques and counter-critiques, many of which have been published in the journal *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* and beyond (Slee, Weiner and Tomlinson, 1998; Thrupp, 1999; Thrupp, 2001; Reynolds and Teddlie, 2001; Teddlie and Reynolds, 2001).

However, to date, criticisms of the field largely from educational sociologists have paid little attention to conceptualizing alternative solutions that may lead to

improvements within our schools. There is acceptance that schools can and do make a difference in terms of educational outcomes of students (Teddle and Reynolds, 2000) but the call for realism (Thrupp, 1999) and the questioning as to whether school improvement can overcome the effects of disadvantage (Mortimore and Whitty, 1997) are timely additions to the wider debate. If this debate is to contribute to the knowledge base and add value to students' experiences of school rather than undermining the contribution the field has made to raising standards. Contributions to the discourse must do more than offer damning attacks. At the very least alternative hypotheses or contrasting possibilities for change must be offered. Only then will the imbalance of social equality within society be fully addressed and improvement in our education system be maximized.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has described the development of school effectiveness and school improvement research and development activity; a field of educational research which has evolved substantially over the past four to five decades (Teddle and Reynolds, 2000). There have been methodological advances combined with improved understanding of processes, cultures and contexts necessary to generate improvements. The knowledge base within the field is underpinned by an increasingly expanding empirical basis. Whether the field has adopted, or indeed in the future can adopt the key messages from *Merging Traditions* (Gray *et al.*, 1996) which calls for a suspension of historic disciplinary disagreements

and the merger of historically determined beliefs remains in question. As Gray and colleagues argue it seems that only when this position is realized will the field develop to a position where researchers and practitioners can discover what it is that would make such dramatic improvements to our schools possible. The knowledge base pertaining to school effectiveness and improvement form the conceptual framework for this thesis. The following chapter relates the key concepts of effectiveness and improvement to the particular context of low attaining schools within the English educational system.

Chapter three

Schools facing Challenging Circumstances:

Improving low attaining schools

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has outlined the literature pertaining to school effectiveness and school improvement. It has drawn on examples of key research and practice from each field to illustrate the evolution of a combined approach to the improvement of schools, identified as third wave improvement (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001). This chapter develops the conceptual framework provided by the fields of effectiveness and improvement, as outlined in chapter two, to consider the literature relating to a particular group of low attaining schools identified as facing challenging circumstances.

This chapter is structured in eight sections. This section introduces the subject matter and outlines the structure of the chapter. Sections two, three and four consider the literature pertaining to the relationship between SfCC and school improvement. They explore the challenge of improving schools located in areas of socio-economic disadvantage and draw on the wider literature to discuss how school improvement research and practice may support these schools. Section two highlights some of the issues associated with the research base on improving SfCC and offers a definition of a '*school facing challenging circumstances*'. It also outlines some of the characteristics associated with these

schools. Section three explores the concepts of low attainment and ineffectiveness in SfCC. Section four draws on the literature to discuss how school improvement research and practice may contribute to improving SfCC.

Sections five and six build on the previous sections by exploring in depth key issues relating to external intervention in improving SfCC. Section five outlines the climate of external intervention during the past decade and how specific interventions have affected SfCCs. Section seven explores external interventions in SfCC through the lenses of accountability and resources. In conclusion, the key points made in the chapter are summarised in section seven.

3.2 School effectiveness and Improvement in schools facing challenging circumstances

With certain exceptions (Reynolds, Harris and Clarke, 2004; Stoll and Myers, 1998) the school effectiveness and improvement movements have largely chosen to work with and study schools from the perspective of the effective institution. Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) note that, unlike work in other applied disciplines such as medicine there has been a lack of attention paid to the 'sick' or ineffective school. Despite some recent exceptions (Louis and Miles, 1990; Reynolds, 1996; National Commission on Education, 1996; Stoll and Myers, 1998; Thrupp, 2001; Maden, 2001) the relative lack of interest demonstrated by school effectiveness and improvement researchers in this field within the United Kingdom has been costly for two important reasons. First, it has led to the under-

conceptualisation of the relationships between internal school factors and external factors that interact to create, and often maintain the most challenging of circumstances in a cycle of underperformance. Second, there is limited experience of what actually works in these schools. Therefore, the knowledge base pertaining to the improvement process in low attaining schools in England, although increasing remains limited.

Political interest in the areas of social inclusion and economic regeneration combined with an intention to raise educational standards has recently focused attention on SfCC. This interest has resulted in the improvement of schools serving some of our most impoverished communities being given high priority by central government (Whitty, 2002). The introduction of 'floor targets' and high profile research and development programmes funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) are testimony of the Labour government's commitment to this. The school standards minister, David Milliband (DfES, 2002), drawing on statistics from the British Cohort Study has outlined the presenting challenge:

By GCSE, more than twice as many children of unskilled workers, as opposed to professional and managerial employees, fail to get five good GCSEs. The overall result is that children born in to the bottom social class are 32 times less likely to make the top as children born there are to

stay...Many of the children who attend the 650 or so secondary schools facing challenging circumstances are from families where survival is a daily grind.

Unfortunately, political will alone appears an insufficient ingredient for improving these schools. The successful improvement of the most challenging schools, serving the most challenged communities is likely to be dependent on two ingredients. First, the development of a sophisticated understanding of the context within which these schools operate and second, the development of appropriate interventions to support improvement processes within these schools. During the past three years central government has attempted to redress the lack of empirical evidence by commissioning a number of research projects in this area (e.g. Harris and Chapman, 2002; Harris, *et al.*, 2003; Reynolds, Harris and Clarke, 2004). Academic researchers have also begun to demonstrate more interest in this area (e.g. Leithwood and Steinbach, 2002). Findings from projects are slowly providing an emerging research base that can provide insight and as to what is necessary to improve these schools. However, in most cases the research projects remain small-scale and are not longitudinal in their design.

The relatively limited evidence base is further complicated by the fact that while there are some highly effective schools in challenging circumstances that demonstrate considerable added-value to levels of student achievement (National

Commission on Education, 1996), there are other schools in very similar circumstances that despite local and national attempts to improve them remain unable to change or manage to improve for only a short period of time (Gray, 2000).

The complexity of this terrain is further compounded by the lack of a common language in this area. The term 'schools facing challenging circumstances' is often used interchangeably with a number of descriptive terms including '*schools in challenging contexts*' (Harris *et al.*, 2003) '*schools in difficulty*' (NCSL, 2003) '*City Schools*' (OfSTED, 2000). In some instances the term is only applied to secondary schools, in others it is used to describe only primary schools or a mixture of both primary and secondary (Heslop, 2001). The following section aims to provide a clear definition of SfCC and a working definition for this thesis. This definition will define population from which schools were identified to take part in this research.

3.2.1 Challenging circumstances: Towards a definition

The SfCC Initiative is central to the DfES '*Standards and Effectiveness Unit's*' (SEU) strategy to raise educational standards in the England. A group of over 600 schools has been identified as 'facing challenging circumstances' in 1999/2000 and 2000/2001. This group contains the lowest attaining secondary schools in England and a high number of low performing schools indicated by the disproportionately high number of these schools placed on Special Measures

(appendix 3.1 and 3.2). Socio-economic disadvantage within this group of schools is also higher than one would expect: on average 36% of pupils are registered for free school meals compared to a national average of 19% (Reynolds, Hopkins, Potter and Chapman, 2001).

For the purposes of this thesis '*challenging circumstances*' is defined using the definition first conceived by the DfES using the single outcome measure of 'low attainment'. All schools failing to meet the government's (self imposed) floor targets where 25% or less pupils achieved five or more top GCSE grades in 1999 and/or 2000 were deemed by the DfES to be facing challenging circumstances. (Reynolds *et al.*, 2001). Examination of the literature and recent research (Hargreaves, 2004; Harris *et al.*, 2003; Weiner, 2002; Whitty, 2002; Harris and Chapman, 2002; Harris, 2000) suggests that attainment alone may be an insufficient indicator of how challenging a school's context be and indeed may be a misleading indication of a school's ability to enhance teaching and learning. In practice, a combination of indicators including free school meal entitlement (which more recently has been considered by the DfES), socio-economic status of parents, parental education and occupation may begin to provide a more accurate diagnosis of the degree of challenge faced by a school.

The DfES definition of '*challenging circumstances*' is based in the assumption that for these schools to be successful they must combat and overcome more

barriers to improvement than one would normally expect of a school. Therefore, a more complete definition of a school facing challenging circumstances follows:

A school that has a disproportionately large number of negative factors acting on it, which in turn significantly inhibits its capacity building and school improvement processes. These factors may be either internally generated, externally governed by local context, or a combination of both.

A detailed understanding of the nature and relationship between these factors is limited. Therefore, further research in this area is needed to illuminate the complexities of change in schools existing in challenging contexts.

3.3 Schools facing challenging circumstances: Low attainment and Ineffectiveness

Policy makers (DfES, 2001) and the media (e.g. TES, 2001a; 2001b) often fail to recognize that the group of SfCC is not a homogeneous group. These schools face a myriad of socio-economic issues (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll and Russ, forthcoming). The common feature that these schools exhibit is low attainment rather than low performance. However, while it is clear that schools identified as requiring ‘special measures’ OfSTED criteria are over represented within the group (thus deemed against OfSTED criteria as failing and therefore ineffective (Gray, 2000; Reynolds *et al.*, 2001), there are also schools that OfSTED have

judged to be highly effective (see chapter eight in Harris, Day, Hopkins, Hadfield, Hargreaves and Chapman, 2003). The group of schools also contains schools with a wide range of improvement trajectories (Reynolds *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, a high degree of caution is needed when considering the group in general terms. As previously noted, it is important to be aware that the common factor within the group is low attainment but other factors could vary widely.

The concepts of educational ineffectiveness and under-achievement rest uneasily within the effectiveness and improvement discourse, both in a philosophical and practical sense (Reynolds, 1996; Gray, 2004). Many practitioners, researchers, policy makers and other educational professionals are keen to improve the performance of their educational system for the future benefit of society (Clark, 1998; Barber, 1996). Working within the constraints of a socio-political context, this usually amounts to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the system using outcome measures based on examination performance and value for money. However, effectiveness may be taken as a relative, rather than absolute term (Day, 2001). Therefore, within the continuum there will be more effective schools and less effective schools. Thus, a school striving for effectiveness must do so at the expense of others. So it may be the case that successful schools are improving their effectiveness at the expense of others. Further support for this argument is found in statistics that demonstrate educational standards in England are rising, but the range in standards within the country is broadening (Barber, 2003). Another source of evidence supporting this

argument can be found in central government policy. Incentives linked to increased funding are often associated with more effective schools. Examples include Beacon Schools, Pathfinder Schools and Specialist School Status that all reward success and effectiveness. Conversely, those schools at the trailing edge are often publicly criticized for their low levels of achievement through the media, OfSTED reports and league tables.

Interestingly, the literature on school ineffectiveness is also relatively limited (Stoll and Mayers, 1998). Until recently, there has only been a cursory interest in educational ineffectiveness. Reasons for this may include:

- control of information by central government to highlight the successes of current policy;
- tensions between central and local government creating a culture of mistrust between national and local level;
- variation in levels of local and national support for ineffective and failing schools;
- the problematic nature of gaining access to schools experiencing difficulties;
- the ability of senior managers in schools to explain poor performance as a function of socio-economic status and associated low expectations of the public and other stakeholders;

Reynolds (1996) argues that ineffective schools are much more complex than simply being the antithesis of effective schools. He suggests that rather than viewing ineffective schools as not having 'success characteristics' it may be more productive to see them as holding additional 'failure characteristics'. The existing knowledge base suggests the characteristics of ineffective schools to include:

At whole school level:

- belief that change is for other people;
- belief that the status quo is the best mode of operation;
- reluctance of individual staff to stand out from a prevailing culture;
- fear of failure and the reluctance to take risks;
- blaming of external factors for the school's inadequacies;
- absence of understanding by staff of alternative policies;
- belief among staff that outsiders have little to contribute in order to improve the school;
- dysfunctional relationships, formation of cliques, underpinned by personality clashes and feuds;
- unwillingness or inability of staff in the school to see that its 'presenting problems' of failure mask the 'real problems' of the institution.
- valid improvement strategies being adopted but not carried through;
- ineffective governing body;
- absence of longitudinal data bases on student progress;
- lack of academic focus.

And at classroom level:

- the timetable being an inaccurate guide to academic time usage;
- wide variation in the quality of teaching;
- low expectations
- an emphasis on supervision and routines;
- low levels of student-teacher interaction about subject matter;
- students perceiving the teachers' not to care or praise;
- high noise levels and non work related movement;
- negative feedback from teachers

(adapted from Reynolds, 1998; Teddlie and Stringfield, 1993)

Many of the above characteristics are directly related to the underlying culture of the organisation. Attempts to characterise the culture of ineffective schools have ranged from '*stuck*' (Rozenholtz, 1989), to '*wandering*' (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994) and '*struggling*' and '*sinking*' (Stoll and Fink, 1996). The similarity between these typologies is that they all assume low levels of social capital within the organisation. Therefore, at face value it would appear that in order to improve an ineffective school, efforts must focus on increasing the levels of social capital within the organisation.

3.3.1 Social disadvantage and school improvement

Research has consistently demonstrated that social disadvantage impacts on the education of students both directly and indirectly (Whitty, 2002). Students from impoverished backgrounds are more likely to be less healthy and less emotionally stable than their more privileged counterparts (Gore and Smith, 2001). They are also less likely to have support and opportunity for learning at home but more likely to have low levels of self-efficacy (Whitty, 2002). In some cases these students could be materially rich, in terms of material possessions but educationally poor in terms of opportunity to learn (Hargreaves, 2003). The percentage of socially disadvantaged students attending SfCCs is higher than the national average (Reynolds *et al.*, 2001). Therefore it is unsurprising that many schools serving socially disadvantaged communities have low attainment and have been identified as SfCC. Gray (2000) highlights this link, also noting that schools serving disadvantaged communities are over represented in the group of schools identified as failing by OfSTED. In summarising the situation Whitty (2002) portrays a depressing situation:

There is long standing- and continuing- evidence that, overall, pupils from disadvantaged social backgrounds fare relatively badly within formal education systems. It is also the case that Britain is one of the advanced educational systems in which this tendency is most marked... There is a strong negative correlation between most measures of social disadvantage and

school achievement, as even a cursory glance at the league tables of school results demonstrates.

(Whitty, 2002, p. 107)

In an attempt to uncouple social disadvantage from low educational outcomes researchers and policy makers have attempted to gain greater understanding of the complexity of the relationship between disadvantage and school improvement. Three fundamental questions have formed the core of this endeavour. First, can schools overcome the effects of disadvantage? Second, if so to what extent? And third, if so can this be sustained over time?

The school effectiveness literature suggests that some schools can and do overcome the effects of disadvantage. However, the literature also suggests achieving '*Success against the Odds*' (National Commission on Education, 1996) is often done so by working at a higher level and exceeding '*normal efforts*' (Maden, 2001). It has been reported that schools which are effective with one group of pupils tend to be effective for other groups (Sammons *et al.*, 1993). In a similar vein Mortimore and colleagues (1998) conclude:

We found that there was little difference in the size of effects of individual schools on the progress of children from different social class groups. Those schools which were effective for one group tended to be effective for the other. Conversely, those which were

ineffective for one group were also usually ineffective for the other.

(Mortimore *et al.*, 1998, p. 208)

The English literature suggests that schools can overcome the effects of disadvantage. However, the extent to which this is possible and whether this can be sustained over time remains unclear. American research suggests that while the overall effect of improvement programmes can be positive, such as in the case of the '*Chapter 1*' programme which was designed to reform schools in disadvantaged areas they can be differentially effective for different groups of students within the schools. Analyses of the '*Chapter 1*' programme found that positive effects were only found among the most advantaged students in these disadvantaged schools (Borman, D'Agostino, Wong and Hedgesw, 1998).

Contrasting messages from the literature highlight the complexity of the situation of improving schools in difficulty. If schools are to be effective for different groups of students it would appear that a range of strategies must be targeted at the needs of different groups of students in order to secure improved outcomes. Hopkins (2001a) argues for differentiated improvement strategies. Using literacy as an example he proposes that low performing (attaining) schools may benefit from a programme such as '*Success for All*', while '*average*' schools could draw on the National Literacy Strategy and the highest performing (attaining) schools could implement the '*Just Read*' programme. This argument can be taken down

to the classroom level, thus differentiating improvement intervention by prior attainment of individual students rather than schools. In Texas, (USA) high stakes testing has been used to decrease the gap in attainment between children from different ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Fuller and Johnson (2001) argue that (despite concerns from some stakeholders) state accountability systems that publish and disaggregate test results based on the lowest performing group of students at school and district level have been the *“central catalytic role in driving the improvements”* (Fuller and Johnson, 2001, p. 278).

Further evidence supporting the argument that schools can overcome the effects of disadvantage can be found in numerous case studies that document leadership tales of transforming failing schools (Clark, 1998; Hampton and Jones, 2000) and *‘Success against the Odds’* (National Commission for Education, 1996; Maden, 2001; Harris *et al.*, 2003; Chapman and Russ, 2004). Whitty, reflecting on the National Commission for Education project highlights the enormity of the challenge for these schools:

In order to achieve improvement, however, such schools have to exceed what could be termed ‘normal’ efforts. Members of staff have to be more committed and work harder than staff elsewhere. What is more, there can be no switching on the ‘automatic pilot’ if schools are aiming to buck the trend.

(Whitty, 2002, p. 109)

Clearly, the wider evidence suggests that schools can ‘buck the trend’ and overcome the effects of disadvantage. However, questions relating to sustainability continue to remain largely unanswered.

The follow-up study to ‘*Success Against the Odds*’ (Maden, 2001) demonstrates the fragile nature of sustaining improvement in these schools. Some did manage to sustain their improvements over the five-year period. However, due to a complex mix and range of factors others schools failed. In a recent study of schools serving communities in the former coalfield areas Harris *et al.*, (2003) reported principles of improvement and their associated strategies that schools implemented to secure an upward improvement trajectory over a five-year period. These included:

- Strategic planning around a school improvement plan;
- Focus on building a learning culture;
- Focus on teaching and learning;
- Development of strong structures to support teaching;
- Developing and distributing leadership within the school;
- High levels of continuing professional development with a focus on developing leadership and teaching and learning across the curriculum;
- Active recruitment and retention;
- Succession planning;

- Management of external factors (eg OfSTED intervention, LEA support).

(Harris *et al.*, 2003)

Some, but by no means all of schools in the study had experienced changes in their intake over the period. They reported changes in the social mix (Thrupp, 1999) had been an important factor that supported their positive improvement trajectory. However, despite the most recent research the extent to which schools serving disadvantaged communities can generate sustainable improvement remains unclear. The debate is characterised on one side by the school improvement and effectiveness literature that suggests there are internal levers that can be pulled to change these schools. While on the other, the work of those associated with the sociology of education points to the external structural properties within the educational system, arguing that these are more powerful and therefore school improvement efforts can only have limited and possibly divisive effect (Thrupp, 1999; Weiner, 2002).

3.4 The challenge of improving schools facing challenging or difficult circumstances

3.4.1 The universals of improvement

The literature base suggests that the most likely interventions to support school improvement in schools facing challenging circumstances will focus on a set of processes managed from within the school (Stoll and Fink, 1996) aimed at targeting raising pupil achievement and strengthening the school's capacity to

manage change (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994). Therefore, paying simultaneous attention to both process and outcome. In their review of the literature Reynolds *et al.*, (2001) identify features associated with successful improvement interventions as:

- developing a vision- having a direction and knowing where one is going;
- monitoring progress- ability to locate one's position within the vision;
- planning- developing strategy to move towards the vision;
- use of information- using multiple sources of data to track progress over time.

The '*Success against the Odds*' study (National commission on Education, 1996) reported that those schools that improve in a challenging educational context share the following characteristics:

- A leadership approach that focuses on team building;
- Vision underpinned by an academic focus including a view on what and how to improve;
- A discerning use of targets;
- Improvement of the physical environment;
- Common expectations about behaviour and success;
- An investment in good relations with parents and the wider community.

Aiming to develop the above characteristics within all schools facing challenging circumstances would seem to be a good starting point. However, the processes

associated with developing them appear more problematic but some principles linked to effective intervention provide a framework to develop a school improvement programme:

- Early and determined intervention;
- Investing in resources;
- Simultaneous multilevel action;
- Blend of pressure and support;
- Co-ordination of internal and external processes.

(Reynolds, *et al.*, 2001)

The literature also suggests that there are a number of internal preconditions for successful improvement including:

- Instructional leadership from the leadership team;
- Whole school emphasis on teaching and learning;
- A commitment to training and continuing professional development;
- Developing a collegial approach including collaborative planning, effective communication, involvement of all stakeholders;
- Resources for reflection and enquiry

(Reynolds *et al.*, 2001)

A forthcoming review of research evidence (Muijs *et al.*, forthcoming) concerning improving schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas offers nine key areas for improvement:

- A focus on teaching and learning;
- leadership;
- creating an information rich environment;
- creating a positive school culture;
- building a learning community;
- continuous professional development;
- involving parents;
- external support;
- resources.

Many of the areas identified by this review have been associated with effective and improving schools *per se* (Sammons *et al.*, 1995; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000) but until recently there has been little or no evidence to support these areas as key to improving SfCC as well as schools in more favourable circumstances. The literature review highlights that while there may be characteristics in common, in SfCC certain characteristics are more important than in more favourable circumstances i.e. involving parents.

The combined evidence from contemporary research and reviews suggest improvement interventions aimed at improving SfCC should have three central constituents. First, programme design should be underpinned by a coherent framework. Second, programmes should focus on ensuring preconditions for improvement are in place and third, programmes should draw on the literature pertaining to what strategies for improvement work in SfCC. This suggests that time spent during the planning phase of the programme will be crucial to its subsequent success. The initial phase of developing a successful intervention is likely to involve collecting detailed information regarding the organisation's culture and capacity for change in an attempt to develop a programme that will match strategies to needs of schools.

Potter *et al.*, (2002) suggest a model for a new school improvement programme of schools facing challenging circumstances. The programme takes characteristics of the high reliability organisations and fuses them with the principles of action enquiry based programmes such as IQEA. This approach tackles on key areas for improvement highlighted in the forthcoming review (Muijs *et al.*, forthcoming) but it remains unclear as to how this model could be differentiated for different schools within the group of SfCC.

3.4.2 Towards a differentiated model of improvement

The literature considered thus far has assumed a general approach to school improvement, providing universal principles or strategies for improvement.

However, the varied nature of the schools within the group of schools deemed to be facing challenging circumstances suggests that a traditional '*one size fits all*' improvement intervention is unlikely to meet with a high degree of success. Therefore, a more differentiated approach is worth considering.

Hopkins, Harris and Jackson (1997) refer to type I, type II and type III schools. Although somewhat crude, this classification helpfully distinguishes between important strategies for failing or ineffective schools, low achieving schools and good or effective schools. All of which can be found in various proportions in the schools facing challenging circumstances category. Hopkins (2001a) expands on the initial conceptualization by offering a number of improvement strategies that may be applicable to failing or ineffective schools; low achieving schools and good or effective schools.

The failing or ineffective school is a 'stuck' school (Rozenholtz, 1989) that lacks the capacity to improve itself and therefore, requires a high level of external support. Hopkins (2001a, pp. 166-172) suggests strategies may include:

- change at leadership level;
- provision of early intensive outside support;
- survey staff and student opinion; gather and disaggregate data on student achievement;
- a short-term focus on things relatively easy to change;

- a focus on managing learning behaviour rather than on behaviour management;
- intensive work on re-skilling teams of teachers in a limited but specific repertoire of teaching and learning styles;
- progressive restructuring to generate new opportunities for leadership, collaboration and planning;
- withdrawal of external pressure and support in order to remove fear and give space to grow.

Hopkins (2001a) argues for a less intensive approach to low 'achieving' schools. His conceptualisation of the issues sit comfortably within central government policy on public services which has been articulated by Barber (2003) as requiring intervention in inverse proportion to need. Hopkins (2001a, p. 168) suggests that schools may:

need to refine their developmental priorities and focus on specific teaching and learning issues and build capacity within the school to support this work.

Hopkins (2001a) argues that appropriate strategies to support such change include:

- change in leadership strategies;

- improving the environment;
- lengthen the lesson unit;
- review something linked to standards (e.g. homework or uniform): involve all staff, students and parents;
- targeting of particular students at certain thresholds (across the ability range);
- talk to pupils about their aspirations: give their achievement meaning.
- harness energy and optimism of staff new to the school;
- generate an on-going dialogue about values.

For the good or effective schools Hopkins (2001a) outlines a broader range of strategies that may be important in keeping the school 'moving' and further enhancing student outcomes:

- articulate values and disseminate eloquence
- raise expectations (teacher, pupil and the wider community), define achievement and create achievement orientation;
- involve and empower students in the focus on student learning and develop a student charter;
- use restructuring (and timetable) to create collaborative planning at department and classroom level;
- engage long-term outside support focused on developing leadership skills team building and models of teaching and learning;

- generate a common language around teaching and learning;
- give teachers the 'space' to experiment;
- celebrate and share successes; reinforce the 'appetite for change'.

The themes of leadership and external intervention feature heavily in each of Hopkins' (2001a) differentiated strategies for improvement in different types of schools. The first, leadership has long been associated with improving and effective schools and as the literature develops in this area has become increasingly clear that successful leadership is central to the improvement process in SfCC (Harris and Chapman, 2002). Although as previously noted, greater effort than the norm is needed from the staff to deliver improvement in this context (Maden, 2001). It would seem likely such super human efforts would also apply to the leadership of these schools. However, for '*ineffective*' schools rather than support the leadership to deliver such efforts the solution has often been to replace the Headteacher and in some cases the senior team with a '*trouble-shooter(s)*' on a short-term contract (Stoll and Myers, 1998), a practice that remains central to current policy (OfSTED, 1999). For the '*moderately*' effective school strategies relating to leadership have involved encouraging leadership teams to take a more strategic view of the organisation and shift the style and balance of leadership within the school. For '*good*' schools the focus has often concentrated on distributing leadership throughout the organisation to teachers (Harris and Muijs, 2003) in an attempt to build organisational capacity (Hadfield, Chapman, Curryer and Barrett, 2001), although developing teacher

leadership and building organisational capacity clearly does not remain the preserve of only the effective school.

The second theme of external intervention, also common to all of Hopkins' (2001a) improvement strategies irrespective of school typology can be viewed from two perspectives. The first perspective can be described as providing the pressure (or challenge) to improve schools and the second perspective providing support for improvement. In England the '*pressure*' or '*challenge*' for improvement can be traced back to interventions aimed at delivering more accountability within the system. Such interventions are located at national and local level and include the regular systematic inspection of all schools, OfSTED categorisation of schools, the publication of league tables and LEA monitoring of progress and associated accountability procedures. In the first instance this increased accountability may provide a 'kick start' improvements or it may be to develop the school's own critical qualities as it moves through various development phases. In this sense external intervention can often be viewed as the 'stick' providing the pressure to improve.

Support for improvement for SfCCs can also be located at both national and local levels. Examples include content specific interventions including the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and interventions delivering increased resources to SfCC through interventions such as Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones. At the local level there are many examples of LEA

based support for improvement. One contemporary example is the IQEA network that involves all nineteen secondary schools in Coventry, six of which have been identified as SfCC. Implicit in the rhetoric of researchers and policymakers work is that schools require support for improvement. Only with the provision of increased resource, whether it be in the form of content or financial assistance will schools be able to '*improve the environment*', '*conduct surveys*', '*re-skill*' or '*restructure*' whilst maintaining other areas of activity. Therefore an important source of support for improvement can be identified as increased resource for improvement activity. Contemporary thinking suggests that if '*strong*' leadership is in place in a school, and in turn, the school is provided with external challenge and additional resource then improvement is likely to occur (Reynolds *et al.*, 2001).

The following section explores the importance external intervention in more detail. First, a brief analysis of contemporary external interventions employed during the past decade is presented. Then, OfSTED inspection is considered as an example of external intervention underpinned by the concept of accountability. Third, the limited literature pertaining to other forms of improvement interventions underpinned by the provision of additional resources are briefly considered. With the exception of OfSTED inspection (and even the evidence here is unclear), the lack of evidence in this third area is an important justification for this research. In conclusion section six summarises the key issues raised in this chapter.

3.5 External interventions in schools facing challenging circumstances

This section considers contemporary interventions that have been employed in an attempt to improve schools facing challenging circumstances during the past decade. First, a brief analysis highlights some of the key principles underpinning the nature of these interventions and second specific examples of interventions are considered.

Education and training are at the core of the renewal of social democracy and have become the new mantra of social democratic politicians (Giddens, 1998) and the election of New Labour in May 1997 under the promise of 'education, education and education' to be the three priorities of government is testimony to this. Many interventions have focused on a zero tolerance approach to educational failure, meaning that all should have the right and opportunity to achieve their academic potential (Barber, 2003). The concepts of pressure (or challenge) and support have become central to government policy. In order to move from a position of relative underperformance, in global terms, whilst generating short-term results a new policy approach has been adopted that combines high levels of both challenge and support (Barber, 2001). Thus, the election of New Labour in 1997 did not produce the shift in balance from challenge to support for the education system that many educators expected, rather it aimed to build upon the Conservative government's reform efforts. The elements of challenge were sharpened and importantly the support was

increased leading to a climate of “*high challenge, high support*” (Barber, 2001, p. 19).

The dimensions of challenge and support pervade external interventions that successive governments have relied upon to deliver higher educational standards. During the past decade several genre of external intervention have evolved. These interventions have had a common purpose, to generate school improvement. However, the mechanisms they have relied upon, and the levers they have pulled in an attempt to deliver improvements have varied substantially. Three styles of intervention have prevailed in educational reform.

The first dominated the 1990s. Examples of this style of *accountability-based intervention* include the development of a national standardised inspection system, the introduction of league tables and an increase of prescriptive LEA categorisation and monitoring of schools. These interventions tended to be characterised by a ‘*technical-rational*’ view of improvement, they were usually underpinned by high levels of pressure, sometimes lacked support and often claimed to provide ‘objective’ and ‘rigorous’ judgements. Arguably, their implementation also tended to serve political, and therefore, national agendas rather than local needs.

The second genre of improvement interventions that can be identified began to appear after the election of the ‘New Labour’ government in 1997. These tended

to be underpinned by a simplistic economic view of improvement i.e EAZs. The assumption appeared to be that the education system was underperforming due to a lack of resources. Therefore, it was argued the solution must be to increase resources. Examples of these *resource-based interventions* include the SfCC initiative (see chapter seven), Education Action Zones and Excellence in Cities. In most cases these interventions were characterised by targeted resources, the production of plans (at the local level) linked to targets (local and national). These interventions also tended to be focused on the national agenda but underpinned by local control in the sense that that some decision-making power was devolved to the local level.

More recently, the Labour government's second term of office has seen the rise of a third genre of intervention. These interventions tend to be underpinned by research evidence and based on the '*technology*' of teaching and learning. Such *technology-based* interventions are characterised by the Literacy and Numeracy strategies and the Key Stage Three Strategy. At one level these often provide a more mechanistic view of improvement that attempts to redress some of failings of the previous intervention efforts. First, they have aimed to manage the tension between national priorities and local need by balancing the dimensions of pressure and support and top-down and bottom up processes. Second, the prescriptive elements have attempted to overcome implementation difficulties experienced due to variation in local competency and capacity. Third, these interventions are usually underpinned by the concept of earned autonomy.

Therefore, at another level where confidence, competency and capacity are high, schools can act with greater autonomy to generate more organic and experimental approaches to improvement. It may be that schools engaging in this form of activity are leading the system into the next phase of improvement. Thus, possibly for the first time schools are starting to dictate the evolution of the next genre of external interventions by articulating their needs and to some extent providing the external support for other schools within the system.

To date, those schools with earned autonomy i.e. high attainment have been engaging in collaboratively driven improvement efforts. This may require yet another form of intervention to support them. It may be that external interventions need to move from an approach based on intervening to one based on co-ordination or facilitation. The first signs of this type of intervention are emerging. Initiatives such as the Leadership Incentive Grant (LIG), Networked Learning Communities (NLC) and the Specialist Schools Trust Support Programme (SSSP) are examples of interventions that provide external support to internal improvement efforts.

It is possible that the primary role of the next mode of improvement interventions will be to manage and broker networks and partnerships of schools, identifying leading practice and managing the transfer of knowledge and practice across schools and networks. However, for external agencies to successfully deliver

they must consider how best they can work collaboratively in order to synergise their activities.

The evolution of external intervention as charted above can be viewed as progressive. They demonstrate a general movement from top-down highly pressurised external interventions towards those that provide a more balanced combination of pressure and support and top-down bottom-up approaches. However, Hargreaves (2003) has warned of dangers of moving towards increased networking and collaboration within a context of earned autonomy. Hargreaves (*ibid.*) claims we are creating an '*apartheid of school improvement*' where high performing, more affluent, well connected sectors of society with high levels of social and intellectual capital flourish within the collaborative frameworks while the poorer low attaining are subjected to highly-prescriptive forms of intervention creating '*performance training sects*'.

The following two sections explore examples of accountability and resource-based interventions. First, the relatively abundant literature pertaining to OfSTED is explored. Second, the relatively limited literature pertaining to the SfCC Initiative and other resource-based interventions is considered.

3.5.1 Exploring accountability based intervention: OfSTED inspection

Until 1992 schools were inspected on a more or less *ad hoc* basis by two bodies HMI and LEA advisors and inspectors. The passing of the 1992 Education

(schools) Act signalled the dawn of a new era in school evaluation, the creation of a non-ministerial government body responsible for school inspections in England and Wales. This new department, the OfSTED initiated a programme where every school in England and Wales is inspected on a four-year cycle against centrally defined criteria.

After an inspection a report is compiled and published by the inspection team. The school is then required to prepare an action plan to address the key issues identified in the report. An ineffective school may be identified as under-achieving or deemed to have serious weaknesses. In schools that are likely to fail or are considered to be failing they are placed in special measures and systems of further intervention are initiated.

Although OfSTED has always claimed 'improvement through inspection', it can be argued that during the early years of its existence, it was primarily concerned with appraising and evaluating schools, reporting on the quality and standards of education provided without prescribing or speculating on possible improvements.

The inspection handbook stated the purpose of OfSTED as:

An appraisal of the quality and standards of education in the school...The function of the report is to evaluate, not prescribe or speculate; reports must be as objective as possible.

(OfSTED, 1993, p. 7)

This early stage of the OfSTED life cycle (1992-1995) focused on an agenda aiming to provide information about what was actually happening in the schools of England and Wales, in the form of a long-term on-going audit. OfSTED had the legal right to regular access to schools, with the consequence of bringing these private institutions in to the public eye.

The original framework was modified several times, before a revised framework was introduced during the summer of 1996. This framework indicated a shift in policy because the issue of improvement became more prominent. The revised framework was to “*promote school improvement by identifying priorities for action*” (OfSTED, 1995a, p. 2), and secondly to assess the school’s own capacity to manage the change process and review its own systems for institutional improvement (Earley, Fidler and Ouston, (1996, p. 3). However, in many cases crucial elements such as trust, mutual respect and the willingness to work together collaboratively were missing from the relationship between OfSTED and schools therefore improvements made as a result of inspection remained questionable (Cullingford, 1999). This stage of OfSTED’s development was the first small shift away from the top-down, pressurized and external model of development towards the diametrically opposed bottom-up, supportive internally-generated model for development as described by MacBeath, (1999). The publication of *School Evaluation Matters* (OfSTED, 1998) can be cited as further

evidence of this shift in the purpose towards helping schools to improve for themselves.

The third, stage of OfSTED's development started with the introduction of the inspection framework in January 2000 (for further details see OfSTED, 1999a). This framework placed an even greater importance on improvement and internal development. The handbook devoted a whole chapter to self-evaluation and clearly states its commitment to internal review and development (OfSTED, 1999a). In September 2003 the current framework was introduced. This saw the introduction of student surveys and further changes to the notice time that schools received and the activities of inspectors during the school visits. More recently, OfSTED (2004a) have published a consultation paper outlining the possible development of a future model of inspection. Proposals include further reduction of the notice of inspection (to less than one week) and compression of the inspection cycle to three years combined with rationalisation of the number of inspector days used per inspection.

Ferguson, Earley, Fidler and Ouston (2000) have suggested a possible future framework where the two elements of the current system are finally teased apart and separated. In their detailed proposals it is suggested that the school and Local Education Authority (possibly with the aid of an external consultant) are responsible for the '*school self-inspection*'. While OfSTED are responsible for the '*inspection for accountability*'. These two separate processes would both

contribute to the outcomes of the report. These proposals must not be regarded as a panacea. It could be argued that not all teachers, schools or LEA's are in position to self-inspect and do not have the knowledge, skills or systems in place to conduct this efficiently or effectively. Considerable training and support mechanisms must be in place before any attempts at implementation. It is also important that external consultants should not be perceived as a 'bolt on' extra but be an integral part of the process providing an independent critical voice free from inter school-LEA politics. These proposals signal a significant step forward and may indicate the first step towards a situation where schools regain control of their own school improvement agenda allowing OfSTED exclusively to develop their public accountability role.

OfSTED and Schools in challenging circumstances

School improvement initiatives have become an integral part of central government policy aimed at raising educational standards (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994). OfSTED is an example of a policy that has had a profound effect on teachers, schools and the wider educational context of England and Wales. Arguably, it has played one of the key roles in national educational reform this century by increasing schools' accountability for their actions, and systematically monitoring their long-term strategic decision-making and progress. However, the claim of '*improvement through inspection*' is less robust in response to criticism. A number of commentators and academics have argued that OfSTED has made only limited contributions towards school development and improvement (e.g.

Taylor Fitz-Gibbon, 1996; Lonsdale and Parson, 1998; Fitz-Gibbon, 1998), while others suggest that despite a body of contemporary research within the field OfSTED's contribution to school improvement remains debatable:

It remains to be seen whether schools improve after inspection. As the first round of inspections of primary and secondary schools has finished and re-inspection has begun, data on improvement will no doubt emerge. It remains to be seen how many key issues (including the very complex ones) have been implemented, their effect and whether schools have been given the same key issues again.

(Cuckle and Broadhead, 1999, p. 186)

Research Intelligence (BERA, 2001), the newsletter of the British Educational Research Association, claims it is difficult to attribute improvements in statistics mainly to OfSTED inspections for two reasons. First, the improvement to the educational system precedes OfSTED inspections by several years, and second, in Scotland where OfSTED does not operate and a different inspection system is in place a similar pattern of improvement is found. Research Intelligence concludes by calling for a thorough study to be commissioned that endeavours to identify the contribution of inspection and other factors to the raising of national standards in education.

At the trailing edge of the educational system OfSTED has documented much success (for example OfSTED, 1997; 1999b; 2000) in improving the lowest attaining and performing schools. A combination of policies offering high levels of challenge and support including more regular inspections and monitoring visits, and increased provision of resources have been the chosen mechanisms for improvement. As these interventions are more frequent and intense, one might expect to see disproportionately large improvements in the cultures and examination performances of these schools over time. However, with some notable exceptions there is little evidence to suggest this, although the vast majority of those placed on special measures do manage to get removed (Gray, 2000). This lack of supporting evidence is further compounded by the traditions of the school effectiveness and improvement movements (as highlighted in chapter two).

Arguably, OfSTED has played one of the key roles in current educational policy through contributing to raising educational standards, especially in relation to ineffective and low performing schools. However the evidence to support this is inconclusive due to a continual redefining of frameworks and concepts. 'Schools in challenging circumstances' is a relatively new Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) generated concept, therefore the literature base relating specifically to this group of schools is marginal. Much of the available literature explores the relationship between OfSTED and challenging schools from an emotive practitioner perspective utilising a case study approach. This genre of

literature rarely attempts to generate substantial generalisable concepts that could be applied to schools in similar contexts. On occasions when an effort is made the propositions are over simplified and little more than common sense in nature (Clark, 1998; Hampton and Jones, 2000). The narrative frequently focuses on the '*journey to recovery*' from the position of special measures rather than the process of inspection and the act of being placed on special measures. The concentration on the healing process at the expense of the diagnosis often submerges the relationship with OfSTED and its contribution to school improvement (Aris, Davies and Johnson, 1998; Clark, 1998; Hampton and Jones, 2000). There are also a number of articles and book chapters that investigate the relationship, either implicitly, or with a sub-set of the schools in challenging circumstances (Wilcox and Gray, 1996; Stoll and Myers, 1997; Earley, 1998; Cullingford, 1999; Gray, 2000; Ferguson et al., 2000; Learmonth, 2000). The knowledge generated and lessons to be learnt from a thin and disparate literature base are limited. More independent studies exploring the relationship between OfSTED and improvement in challenging schools are needed.

Improvement through inspection: Rhetoric or reality?

Earley (1996) suggests that there has been very little research addressing the key question of whether inspection actually plays a significant role in school improvement or development. OfSTED itself (OfSTED, 1995b; OfSTED 1997; OfSTED 1999b) has produced a plethora of literature to support its claim of

'improvement through inspection', but despite a growing body of contemporary research within the field this key question largely remains in place.

Matthews and Smith (1995) argue that OfSTED inspection promotes improvement at both the national level and also school level. At a national level it is argued that one of OfSTED's responsibilities is to 'use information collected through inspection to provide advice to the Secretary of State'. The implication is that this advice is then used to formulate policy to direct national improvement efforts. This is a perfectly feasible argument, but it is based on the assumption that the information collected is reliable, and gives a true picture of our schools. Fitz-Gibbon (1998) claims that OfSTED has failed in its responsibility to be accurate in its judgements:

(OfSTED's) responsibility (is) to demonstrate that its judgements are sufficiently accurate to be both fair and value for money. This it has singularly failed to do, either in measuring whole school performance or in judging individual teacher performance.

Fitz-Gibbon (1998, p. 24)

Fitz-Gibbon (1998) uses "a fairly average group of schools" (p. 24) to illustrate the point. The average value added scores of the group of YELLIS schools fall largely in the middle half, between the lower and upper quartiles over a four year period, except during the year of inspection. All fourteen schools in the study

were placed into special measures and deemed to be failing. Fitz-Gibbon (1998) suggests that the reason for this is that inspectors are making inaccurate guesses about progress and the effectiveness of the school.

This argument suggests that the government may be basing national educational policy on inaccurate data (Fitz-Gibbon, *ibid*; 1996) obtained through potentially unreliable methodologies (Wilcox and Gray, 1996). If this is the case then priorities for improvement may be incorrectly identified and important opportunities missed. Furthermore, ignoring the allegations relating to the accuracy of data, OfSTED's own data highlights the challenge OfSTED faces in achieving improvement through inspection. The most recent HMCI annual report (2004) has reported that in 2002-2003 more schools (160 schools) than the previous year (129 schools) were placed into special measures and 43 schools that had been designated previously as having serious weaknesses had not improved sufficiently when they were re-inspected, consequently they were placed in special measures.

At the school level, Matthews and Smith (1995) highlight the importance of the preparation period before inspection contributing towards school improvement. School buildings may be smartened up, new interactive displays of the pupils' work mounted and efforts made to ensure a high quality of lesson preparation and marking by teachers (Gray and Wilcox, 1995). Gray and Wilcox (1995) also

note the higher levels of stress and anxiety experienced by teachers during this period arguing that:

Such effects, both positive and negative, are however likely to be relatively short lived with normality returning when the inspection is over.

(Gray and Wilcox, 1995, p. 82)

It could be argued if the positive aspects do outweigh the negative influence, the scope for improvement before inspection is limited, at best being unsustainable and short-term in nature therefore accounting for only minimal effects on student outcomes. When considering the improvement that a school makes as a result of inspection Matthews and Smith (1995) argue for the formulation, production and implementation of an action plan as a source of improvement. This plan must be produced within forty days and address the key issues for improvement identified during the inspection.

Some important assumptions must be made when exploring the contribution that an OfSTED generated action plan can make towards improvement. Firstly, it must be assumed that accurate information about the school must have been collected. The second assumption is that OfSTED's definition of what constitutes effectiveness is valid, and the third assumption is the inspectors' have the skills and knowledge necessary to suggest improvements that are suitable to the

particular context of the school. If these assumptions are accepted the amount of improvement generated will be dependent on the school's capacity for improvement (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994) and the extent to which the school implements the action plan (Gray and Wilcox, 1995; Wilcox and Gray, 1996).

There may be some discrepancy between a school's perception of improvement and the actual improvement achieved. However a British Educational Management and Administration Society (BEMAS) study suggests that many schools find inspection a useful tool contributing towards school development. This appears to be the case especially when there is moderate overlap between the action plan and the school development plan (SDP). The same study also reports that the majority of schools found that school development remained unchanged or slowed down in the year after inspection (Ouston, Fidler and Earley, 1996).

Despite the growing body of literature, whether or not school improvement is generated as a result of OfSTED inspection remains a contested question. However, it is widely accepted that there are issues concerning the cost effectiveness of the process (Hargreaves, 1995; Lonsdale and Parsons, 1998; Thomas, 1999). For example if OfSTED is only verifying what the school already had identified as priorities for improvement then it could be argued that OfSTED's role in improvement is minimal, and the money spent on the inspection process would be better employed attempting to generate improvement through other

means. Hopkins and colleagues (1994) suggest that a collaborative partnership between the head teacher and staff of a school combined with the use of an external body (advisor, consultant etc.) is more likely to improve a school than any model based on inspection.

Changing classrooms through inspection

It no surprise that the current OfSTED framework examines classroom practice in detail paying close attention to the quality of teaching and learning provided. The growing research evidence suggests that variation in effectiveness occurs not only between schools, but also within them (Sammons, Thomas and Mortimore, 1997; Creemers, 1994). What happens at the classroom level in terms of teacher practice appears to be important, and can make significant contributions to school improvement (Reynolds, 1999).

If OfSTED is to realize its full potential it must not only evaluate classroom processes, but also change them for the better. There are two major opportunities for OfSTED to encourage change at the classroom level. Firstly, indirectly by indicating issues of teaching and learning as 'key issues' for action. This should result in the school preparing an action plan aimed at improving teaching and learning. The limitation of this model is that improvements in teaching practice may only occur in less effective schools where teaching and learning has been identified as a weakness, such as the case of Brookfield Special School (Aris, Davies and Johnson, 1998). The absence of teaching and

learning related issues from the key issues for action does not indicate that teaching is perfect and therefore cannot be improved. The only situation where teaching and learning could not be improved in a school (according to OfSTED's definition of teaching and learning) would be when every lesson observed was awarded a grade one. In reality this appears unlikely, therefore another lever to generate improvement at the classroom level is necessary.

The second and more direct opportunity that OfSTED has to improve classroom practice provides the potential mechanism to achieve this. Lesson observations during the inspection must identify areas for improvement in individual teachers' practice and recommendations for specific changes to the teacher's practice must follow. This model for classroom improvement is also has limitations. It relies heavily on three factors, firstly the ability of the inspector to identify areas for improvement, secondly to interact and communicate them effectively with the teacher. Thirdly the teacher must be willing to listen to the suggestions and implement the recommendations.

Brimblecome, Ormston and Shaw (1996) have carried out one of the few studies investigating the relationship between OfSTED inspection and change at the classroom level. They examine teacher intentions to change practice and their perceptions of the inspection process. They accept that intention to change practice may not necessarily equate with actual changes in practice. It is noted

that while this is not a particularly satisfactory situation it provides a suitable starting point for future research into this area.

Their findings report that just over one-third of teachers that were surveyed intended to change some aspect of their professional practice as a result of OfSTED inspection with teaching style and method (especially relating to differentiation) being the most likely aspect of practice to be changed. These reported changes are directly related to inspection observations and interactions as the questionnaires were administered after inspection but before the publication of the report.

A more recent study (Brunel University and Helix consulting group, 1999) suggests that 58% of schools changed their teaching styles and curricular organization. Assuming that teaching styles and curricular organization equate to changes in classroom practice the difference between these findings, and those reported by Brimblecombe and colleagues can be accounted for through methodological differences. Firstly, in the Brunel and Helix (1999) study it is not clear when the questionnaires were administered or collected in relation to the actual inspection. However it is implied that they were collected after the publication of the report, and therefore after key issues were identified and priorities for development agreed. This suggests the higher figure of 58% compared to the 38% reported by Brimblecombe and colleagues (1996) also includes changes in practice generated indirectly from inspection through the

post-OfSTED development plan which may account for the disparity between the findings.

The second difference is that the Brunel and Helix (1999) study only surveyed head teachers. There may have been a void between school rhetoric and classroom reality. Head teachers may have over estimated the changes in practice at the classroom level by assuming all teachers had implemented any changes as requested. It could be argued that the second difference suggests that the Brunel University and Helix (1999) report of 58% changes in teaching style and curricular organization is an over estimate of the effect of OfSTED at the classroom level.

Lowe (1998) described the extent of implementation of inspection recommendations one-year after inspection, and teachers' responses to their associated discourses, opportunities for 'real' change in the classroom were then commented on. He reported that only one of the seven case study schools had substantially implemented inspection recommendations related to teaching and learning, while three had demonstrated some implementation, and the remaining three either limited or no implementation of the recommendations. Lowe (1998) reports of one case study school:

OfSTED's views about the quality of teaching and learning had not penetrated the classroom and teachers still maintained their right to determine the scope of teaching and learning.

Lowe (1998, p. 106)

This experience supports the view that OfSTED only has a limited impact on change in the classroom, and that teachers are maintaining their professional integrity despite an external attempt to reduce their knowledge and skills to a technical level. This argument may also suggest that the 'tyranny' of an OfSTED orthodoxy (Brighouse and Moon, 1995) is being adverted by teachers rejecting OfSTED's values continuing to practice what they believe to be 'best practice' in their own classrooms.

Teachers perceptions and reactions to inspection

Teachers have had to get used to a situation where inspection is a part of their everyday professional life (Wilcox and Gray, 1996) and there are many reported cases of fear, stress and associated negative perceptions towards the process of inspection (Grubb, 1999). It could be argued that urban myths within teaching and the 'have you been done yet' (Russell, 1996) siege mentality propagates this situation. Despite these perceptions the literature reports that most relationships with inspectors are positive (Wilcox and Gray, 1996; Brimblecombe et al., 1996; Kogan and Maden, 1999), often developing from a starting point of mutual respect (Russell, 1996). Teachers' feelings of anxiety and stress appear to be at

their worst during the build up period to inspection. Brimblecombe and colleagues (1996) suggest that the thought of inspection is worse than the actual inspection itself. They also report that how senior management teams prepare their staff for inspection can determine how prepared for the event they feel (Shaw, Brimblecombe and Ormston, 1995).

The inspection week when the inspectors are in school can be tense, although some teachers suggest feelings of anti-climax after a long build up (Brimblecome, Ormston and Shaw, 1995). As might be expected lessons are more highly prepared for inspection week (Wilcox and Gray, 1996; Ferguson, Earley, Fidler and Ouston, 2000), but perhaps less predictably Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1996) report that a quarter of teachers planned to deliver a more formal didactic lesson than normal. In the same study one-fifth of teachers noted a change in their own behaviour and one-half noted a change in pupil behaviour when an inspector was in the classroom.

In a review of the first one hundred inspections (OfSTED, 1994, p. 26) it was reported that 'In over half of the schools, staff were disappointed that there was not more opportunity for discussion with inspectors after lessons'. A second OfSTED based report arrived at similar conclusions, suggesting that classroom teachers were the least satisfied group of teachers with the oral feedback they received (OfSTED, 1995d). These findings combined with the BEMAS research

reported by Earley (1996) provided growing evidence for a less than perfect situation regarding the issue of teacher feedback during inspection.

Brimblecombe and colleagues at Oxford Brookes University recognized the importance of feedback in relation to teacher anxiety (Brimblecombe et al., 1995) and intention to change practice (Brimblecombe, Shaw and Ormston, 1995). It was not until 1998 that feedback to teachers on their teaching performance became an integral part of every inspection. The effectiveness of this feedback is yet to be substantiated. Many teachers (and inspectors) doubt the impact feedback has on their practice:

Inspection weeks are intense and busy times for inspectors and the school. Feedback requires detailed planning and the appropriate atmosphere for teachers to gain the most from it. This is difficult to achieve during inspection week...few teachers in the case study schools could think of ways in which feedback might have had an influence on their practice

(Ferguson et al., 2000, p. 49)

OfSTED has made efforts to improve the quality of feedback by issuing more guidelines to inspectors. The current framework implemented January, 2000 explains:

You (the inspector) should offer feedback to every teacher observed. The objective is to improve the teacher's effectiveness. You should try, whenever possible, to give first hand feedback on the lessons (that) you observe. The purpose is to let teachers know your perception of the quality of the lessons and the responses of the pupil: what went well; what was less successful; and what could be done more effectively

(OfSTED, 1999, p. 127)

It seems that some feedback is better than none because it helps to relieve the sense of isolation that many teachers felt before its introduction (Ferguson *et al.*, 2000). However if feedback is to have a substantial impact on classroom practice the quality must be improved. The focus must be on celebrating success and suggesting changes for improvements and it must be conducted in an appropriate place at an appropriate time.

Commentary

The literature is inconclusive as to whether OfSTED inspection supports school improvement. It would seem that for some schools in some contexts inspection can support improvement efforts but for others it can act as a hindrance. Therefore, increasing the accountability of individuals and groups of individuals within the system may only yield benefits for some schools in some contexts. The question that remains unanswered is whether improvement efforts in England are

relying on too much accountability and pressure without providing the necessary levels of support. Is there an imbalance of pressure and support in our attempts to improve SfCC? Barber (2000) has argued for a system driven by high levels of pressure and high levels of support to deliver raised educational standards. However, we do not know whether this policy will deliver the improvements that are needed. The following section draws on the literature relating to contemporary national external interventions that are underpinned by high levels of support in the form of increased resources for SfCC. This section relates directly to phase two of this research.

3.5.2 Exploring resource based intervention in SfCCs

In contrast to the wealth of literature available relating to OfSTED inspection the literature relating to contemporary '*resource-based*' interventions is relatively limited. Therefore, rather than focusing on only the example explored as part of this research (SfCC initiative) several examples are considered. It is unsurprising that the election of a new Labour government in 1997 heralded changes in central government education policy. What is more surprising is the sheer volume and nature of these changes. In terms of volume, about fifty new policies were articulated within the first ten weeks of the administration (Barber and Sebba, 1999). These policies tended to build upon the Conservative legacy by providing high levels of support to the high levels of challenge within the system (Barber, 2001). However, there are examples of interventions that rely heavily on increasing resources in disadvantaged schools. The standards fund has been

central to government policy in terms of delivering interventions to secure improvement in disadvantaged areas. Examples of such initiatives include:

- Schools in Challenging Circumstances;
- Excellence in Cities;
- Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant;
- Study Support;
- Pupil Retention Grant

This section highlights some examples of policies that have been introduced to support SfCC by providing higher levels of support through increased resources than these schools had previously experienced. Many of these area-based interventions have aimed to tackle socio-economic disadvantage through the promotion of partnership and innovation (Power, Gewirtz, Halpin and Whitty, 2000). One such example is the Excellence in Cities (EIC) programme that acknowledges the need to invest major resources to secure school improvement in inner city schools (West and Pennel, 2003). Phase 1 of the programme started in 1999 involving secondary schools in Birmingham, Manchester, Inner London, Liverpool, Leeds and Sheffield. Phase two saw the programme grow to include thirty-three new LEA and extension of the programme to primary schools in phase 1 LEAs (DfES, 2001). By phase 2002 there were fifty-eight LEAs involved in the excellence in cities programme.

The aim of the programme is to provide both equity and diversity for all students and in turn to convince all parents, the voters, that state education meets the needs and aspirations of all (Barber, 2001). The mission statement for excellence in cities, which is sent to every participating school focuses on four core beliefs:

- high expectations of every pupil;
- diversity;
- networks;
- extending opportunity;

Barber (2001) outlines seven strands of the programme that turn the beliefs into reality:

- gifted and Talented- specialised teaching for top 10% most able students;
- removing the Barriers to learning- use of 'learning mentors';
- behaviour support- development of learning support units within schools;
- Beacon Schools- Receipt of additional funding to be responsible for the professional development of other schools;
- Specialist Schools- receipt of additional funding linked to the responsibility to share their expertise and resources;
- City Learning Centres- School based centres that provide community learning opportunities during and outside of traditional school hours and days;

- Education action zones- small cross-phase networks of schools aimed at providing a coordinated approach to education, health and social services within an area.

The EiC programme has a relatively brief history since its launch in 1999. However, Barber (2001) claims it has demonstrated “*vital signs*” of improvement by reducing truancy and exclusion and improving pupils’ attitude (Although he provides no supporting evidence for this). Barber (2001) also claims signs of cultural change through breaking down the isolation of many inner-city schools’ and a new sense of shared endeavour. Conversely, Whitty (2002, p. 119)

considers the policy to be weak:

Overall, whatever their benefit in particular schools, these policies have so far been relatively weak in respect of overcoming disadvantage and tackling inequalities.

Plewis (1998) speculates such policies may even exacerbate inequalities within the system. However, Whitty (2002, p. 123) does concede the policy may have achieved, in some cases, duality of inclusion in the sense of:

retaining more middle class children in such schools as well as pursuing its more manifest aim of raising achievement among working class groups.

The EiC programme is relatively well documented but there are other policies that have received less attention. These include the SfCC initiative which provides the focus for the second phase of this research. Unfortunately, the literature relating specifically to this project is marginal. There has been brief treatment presented in the government white paper '*Achieving Success*' (DfES, 2001) and it is also mentioned on the DfES standards website. However, the actual mechanics of the project remain vaguely documented and difficult to clarify. The rate or extent to which the project has evolved or transformed into a broader set of policies is also unclear. References made in the academic literature are either notable by their absence, vague and sometimes confusing, even in some cases inaccurate (e.g. West and Pennell, 2003). Therefore, the following outline of the SfCC intervention draws on personal insights gained from involvement with the project initiative.

This project was funded by the DfES and contracted to the Universities of Exeter and Nottingham under the directorship of professors Reynolds and Hopkins. The project was aimed at developing solutions to the low attainment of secondary schools. The programme was composed of several elements. The first included the preparation and presentation of an international literature review and

improvement guide relating to schools in challenging circumstances. The second, involved a number of regional seminars where policy makers, practitioners and academics presented a combination of theory and practice to Headteachers and some LEA and DfES advisors (see appendix . The third, focused on devolution of £70,000 to each school (£20,000 to those in EAZs) on the DfES's receipt of a 'satisfactory' raising achievement plan coupled with agreement to a supportive HMI monitoring visit to assess progress made within the initiative.

The contribution that this project has made to the improvement of these schools remains largely unanswered and is therefore a key research question addressed by this thesis. However, evidence emerging from the closely related project targeting eight schools in extremely challenging circumstances is encouraging (Reynolds, Harris and Clarke, 2004). Initial findings from the first round of an independent evaluation conducted by the University of Cambridge has drawn positive conclusions relating to the progress made by schools involved with the programme. (University of Cambridge, 2003a; 2003b). These findings are further supported by rises in the percentage of students gaining top grade GCSE results in seven of the eight schools in 2003.

Evidence pertaining to the success of resource based interventions such as EiCs and EAZs remains relatively limited and research conducted in this area tends to be in the form of government sponsored evaluations (University of Cambridge, 2003a; 2003b; Stoney, West, Kendall, Morris, 2002; Price Waterhouse Coopers,

2001). The findings from these early evaluations conclude while there have been improvements in some areas in others the interventions have done little support improvement. For example, in the case of EAZs, Price Waterhouse Coopers (2001) acknowledge that the policy has facilitated new way of working locally but concede that objectives have only been partially met due to confusion and over government intentions or lack of achievement within EAZs themselves. A similar picture is provided by EiC evaluations where leadership and local conditions are cited as important factors contributing to consistent implementation and variation in these factors may be responsible for the lack of consistent improvement across the system (Stoney *et al.*, 2002). Using their findings from an evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, Leithwood, Janzi, Earl, Watson, Levin and Fullan (2004) also highlight the relationship leadership and external intervention. Leithwood and colleagues (2004) agree that laterally distributed leadership must be imbedded within a complementary vertical leadership structure if large-scale reforms are to succeed.

Findings from the USA largely concur with those reported above pertaining to the English context. An evaluation of the large-scale RAND project in the USA reported that the project failed to achieve improvements in all areas and the evaluation concluded that fidelity of implementation (Teddle and Reynolds, 2000) at the local level was a key factor in achieving widespread and uniform improvement through external intervention. In a similar vein, Datnow and Colleagues (2002) challenge the ability of external interventions providing the

mechanism to scale up reform from individual schools to the system level. These concerns are also highlighted in a recent review of the literature concerning '*what works*' in improving low performing schools Collaro and McDonald (2002). The review concludes that external policies, procedures and practices can support or hinder the implementation of interventions and that external agencies can play an important role in the assisting school personnel in diagnosis and planning for improvement. The available evidence concerning the relationship between external intervention and school improvement in challenging contexts is not encouraging. It would seem that while interventions can make a difference in some schools and circumstances the same intervention often fails to impact on another apparently similar context.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has considered the literature concerning the improvement of SfCC. In particular it has focused on what is thought to work in terms of improving these schools. The literature identifies school leadership and the input of external support as important factors in improving SfCC. These two themes have been addressed in more detail in the latter part of the chapter. The literature suggests that external interventions underpinned by predominantly accountability systems or conversely those dominated by increased resources are likely to yield, at best, only patchy successes. The school improvement literature would also suggest that any intervention must have elements tailored to specific school needs but in

terms of implementation the content of the intervention must be consistently implemented. Thus, consistent implementation of external interventions across different contexts is also an important factor in improving SfCC.

The next two chapters outline the methodology employed in this thesis to explore the relationship between external intervention and improvement of SfCC in more detail.

Chapter four

Developing a methodology: *Theoretical and practical considerations*

4.1 Introduction

In order to explore the research questions posed in this thesis a research design providing reliable and valid conclusions needed to be constructed. This chapter considers some methodological issues relating to the research design and the methods of data collection and analysis that were developed (see chapter five). The terrain covered in this chapter ranges from theoretical considerations of this study to the pragmatic realities of conducting an enquiry within the social sciences, particularly within the field of educational research. This chapter is structured into four sections. Following this introduction, the second section considers the development of a theoretical framework. The third section considers important principles of social science research that have been incorporated into the research design. The fourth section highlights the key decisions taken in the development of a research strategy.

4.2 Developing a Theoretical Framework: the research process

Robson (1997) chooses to explore the research process by comparing the scientific or positivist model with the interpretive approach to research in the social sciences. He argues that there are different views about the role and

place of theory and also about the order in which events occur:

One model says that you collect all the data before you start to analyse it. A different one has data collection and analysis intertwined... One is variously labeled as positivist, natural-science based, hypothetico-deductive, quantitative or even simply as 'scientific'; the other as interpretive, ethnographic or qualitative- among several other labels.

(Robson, 1997, p. 18)

These alternative approaches to research have resulted in natural scientists tending to engage in hypothesis or theory testing (Robson, 1997; Yin, 1994) while those working within the interpretive paradigm often engage in hypothesis or theory generating (Robson, *ibid.*; Yin, *ibid.*). In an attempt to highlight fundamental differences between these perspectives researchers positioned in one tradition or the other have been metaphorically labeled as '*engineers*' as opposed to '*explorers*' (Spradley, 1980 cited in Robson, 1997). These positions appear to sit together uncomfortably. As Robson (1997) notes:

These differences [relationship between data collection and analysis] fall within two main traditions which continue to engage in sporadic warfare.

(Robson, 1997, p. 18)

However, Robson (1997, p. 20) also recognises traditional positions present difficulties for those engaged in “*relatively small scale real world investigations*”. Therefore, he argues, there is a need for some rethinking of the approach taken to research real world situations.

In contrast to Robson (1997) Denzin and Lincoln (2000) outline a generic framework describing the research process. This framework consists broadly of five overlapping phases:

Phase 1: The researcher: An exploration of self;

Phase 2: Theoretical paradigms and perspectives;

Phase 3: Research designs and strategies;

Phase 4: Methods of collection and analysis;

Phase 5: The art, practices, and politics of interpretation and presentation.

(Adapted from Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 20)

This section will draw on phases one to four of this framework to tackle issues relating to the research process.

4.2.1 The researcher: A brief exploration of self

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that all (qualitative) researchers are philosophers and that highly abstract principles guide matters of ontology, epistemology and methodology and perhaps most importantly:

These beliefs shape how the qualitative researcher sees the world and acts in it. (p. 19)

Likewise, other researchers (Day, 1999; Hargreaves, 1994) have argued values and beliefs held by an individual are intrinsically linked to their own education, professional existence and broader life experiences. Therefore, it seems likely that the combination of experiences and knowledge gained in these areas could influence one's sense of being (ontology) and the relationship between what we see and understand (epistemology) (McKenzie, 1997). Thus, it is likely that experience relates to a researcher's understanding of, and position regarding ontological, epistemological and methodological matters.

This situation may create tensions arising between the needs of the researcher and the choice of type of enquiry most likely to generate meaningful insights to

the research questions. As Robson (1997) concedes:

Undoubtedly there are situations and topics where a 'scientific' quantitative approach is called for, and others where a qualitative naturalist study is appropriate.

(His emphasis) (p. 20)

Robson (1997) appears to be suggesting that researchers have one of two options. First, individual researchers can only attempt to tackle certain investigations as defined by congruence between their paradigm perspective and appropriate research questions. Or alternatively, second, researchers must be flexible in their approach and not imprisoned by any one perspective. Robson (1997) prefers to take the second, pragmatic approach, viewing the differences between the two paradigms as:

technical rather than epistemological, enabling the enquirer to 'mix and match' methods according to what best fits a particular study.

(p. 20)

Developing the methodology for this thesis has enabled the researcher to consider his own formal education; a mixture of social and pure science training. The nature of this 'combined' educational background could support the

researcher to legitimately claim a strong association with any one or a number of paradigms associated with educational research. However, the researcher has preferred to take Robson's (1997) guidance by choosing to consider the distinction between the traditions on a technical rather than epistemological basis. This has prevented the research from becoming wedded to one particular paradigm and perhaps most importantly, it has allowed the development of a pragmatic approach with the flexibility to draw on particular paradigms and their associated methods when necessary, thus allowing the methods employed to be tailored to the needs of particular research questions.

In the field the researcher is placed in a privileged position (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This unique situation often provides physical access to restricted areas within an organization. For example, in a school this may be the Headteacher's office, staffrooms or classrooms. In addition to physical access researchers also may have a high degree of emotional access. Individuals may choose to share intimate information about themselves, colleagues, students or the organisation. In parallel to privilege comes responsibility to build a "*committed, moral, civic, social science*" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 32) by avoiding "*questionable practices*" (Robson, 1997, p. 32). Robson presumes avoidance of these practices

unless:

In a particular study you can convince yourself, and an appropriate 'ethical committee', that the benefits accruing outweigh the costs.

(Robson, *ibid*, p. 32)

This cost-benefit approach appears to contradict Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) position. Similarly, to the paradigm debate (where, as previously noted Robson chooses to take a pragmatic position, considering research paradigms to be technical rather than epistemological in nature) he again chooses the more convenient pragmatic stance where values, beliefs and also in this case morals appear to be fluid rather than fixed.

For the purposes of this research care has been taken to adopt Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) position on ethical considerations. This is the case on both moral and practical levels. First, there is a high level of professional respect. Experienced gained from teaching in SfCCs has provided the researcher with a deep understanding of the nature of teachers' lives and the context and conditions within which they work. Second, on a practical level, the researcher is aware of the many demands, internal and external, being placed on teachers in these schools. Therefore, there is a strong incentive to provide something in

return for the additional pressure put on individuals in terms of time and workload. This is not an attempt to coerce individuals to take part in research activity but to provide compensatory rewards in recognition of their willingness to participate on an equitable basis. This has been achieved by adherence to a strict code of conduct during the execution of this research derived from four key moral principles that underpin the work of the researcher in this study:

- **Informed consent**

Research subjects have the right to be informed about the nature of the research and possible consequences in which they are involved.

- **Deception**

Research within the context of informed consent also would seek to eradicate active deception within the design of research projects.

- **Privacy and confidentiality**

Privacy of individuals must be respected at all times. Personal data must be treated as confidentiality and only represented in an anonymous form.

- **Accuracy**

Ensuring data are represented accurately is a core principle of the social sciences. Failure to represent data accurately is non-scientific and unethical.

(Adapted from Christians, 2000, pp. 139-140)

4.2.2 Theoretical Paradigms and Perspectives

Educational research has endured much criticism and scrutiny from policy makers and even researchers within their own community (Kaestle, 1993). Pring (2000) argues that some of the factors responsible for this internal skepticism include political motives and the ideological underpinnings of research programmes. It could be argued that within the social sciences, and particularly education, the nature of research has evolved to the point where two opposed dichotomous entrenched positions have emerged.

In support of this argument and in a similar vein to other educational researchers (e.g. Cohen and Mannion, 1989; Robson, 1997; Coleman and Briggs, 2002), Pring (*ibid*) argues there are two distinct traditions within educational research, each with its own philosophical foundations and associated methodologies. The first tradition has tended to view educational research as a sub-set of the social sciences where empirical enquiries are rooted in the methodologies of educational psychology and more recently sociology:

Thus, it [educational research] seeks general laws or conditions that will enable teachers or policy makers to predict what will happen... It seeks to establish empirically the most efficient and effective ways of attaining certain goals.

(Pring, 2000, p. 31)

The second tradition (and according to Pring the more prevalent) is diametrically opposed to this crudely positivist stance:

A quite different tradition of educational research has prevailed- one which purports to reveal the understandings and perceptions of the subjects of the research- 'The phenomenology of the mind'. Such are the peculiarities of each person's perceptions and interpretations that generalizations are impossible. Persons can not be the object of scientific enquiry... Since an 'educational practice' is where individuals 'make sense' (starting from their different perspectives) of experience, struggle to understand and come to find value in different things and activities, then it cannot be grasped within general laws or theories.

Pring (*ibid.*, p. 31)

These two competing and dichotomous traditions may be central to the criticisms levied and therefore, at least partially responsible for the resulting lack of confidence and conflict between some factions within educational research.

Whether these two positions actually exist in practice is unclear. For example, if one examines development of the fields of school effectiveness and school improvement research, it is clear that school effectiveness research has relied

largely on an empirically based positivist tradition and associated methodologies. While the school improvement movement has tended to rely heavily on a constructivist approach and associated methodologies. The convergence of these two fields has demonstrated that the two traditions can be combined to generate a productive body of knowledge. As Pring (*ibid.*, p. 33) states:

Such dichotomies are mistaken... researchers have fallen into a philosophical trap, which is very old indeed. It is the ancient dualism between mind and body, between the publicly accessible and the privately privileged. Educational research is both and neither.

The previous arguments claiming the existence of a false dichotomy within the traditions of educational research suggest that it is necessary to develop an alternative philosophical framework within which this study can be located. The reasons for this are clear. Without defining an appropriate and sound philosophical basis it is unlikely that an appropriate methodology will be developed with the power to address the research questions. In order to define the philosophical basis, issues concerning epistemology must be explored and addressed. This research has focused on avoiding a '*philosophical trap*' by attempting to develop a research strategy most likely to provide useful insight to the questions posed without encountering overload from '*paradigm baggage*'. The purpose of this thesis is to add to the knowledge base in the fields of school effectiveness and improvement by providing insights into improving SfCCs that

have relevance to policy, practice and future research. A similar pragmatic position is outlined by Pierce (1878) in his writings developing the ideas that formed the basis of pragmatic philosophy. Essentially, he suggested a relationship between words and their practical significance by arguing that the meaning of a concept expresses itself in practical consequences:

Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of the conception of the object.

(Peirce in Thayer, 1982, p. 48)

This thesis attempts to demonstrate a relationship between theory and practice by the collection of empirical data. Therefore, a pragmatic stance is taken in the development of the research design and strategy.

4.3 Research designs and strategies

The previous section has briefly described alternative paradigms and located the researcher within the philosophical position of the pragmatic tradition. This position provides the justification to explore epistemological differences that refer to different underlying theories of explanation, truth and verification and methodological differences associated with them. This section focuses on

important considerations in the development of a research design and strategies for this thesis.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) acknowledge that research design must come before research strategy. They argue that at the core of research design is the focus on research questions and associated purposes of the study and the research design describes:

a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms to strategies of enquiry and second to methods for collecting empirical data. A research design situates researchers in the empirical world and connects them to specific sites, persons, groups, institutions, and bodies of relevant interpretive material, including documents and archives. A research design also specifies how the investigator will address issues of representation and legitimation.

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 22)

Thus, the research design will inform the research strategy, which enables the researcher to move from the theoretical to the empirical world. This is the important transition from a theoretical position, with associated assumptions,

values and beliefs to the real world:

Strategies of inquiry put paradigms of interpretation into motion.

At the same time, strategies of inquiry also connect the researcher to specific methods of collecting and analyzing empirical materials.

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 22)

Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 368) note that research design “*situates the investigator in the world of experience*”. For Robson (1997) the research design has a practical purpose of turning research questions into projects. He argues that this is achieved by developing a general approach or ‘research strategy’ that draws on appropriate methods and techniques to address the research questions. Robson describes three traditional research strategies:

- **Experimental-** *which is concerned with measuring the effect of manipulating one variable on another variable;*
- **Survey-** *involving collection of data in standardized form from groups of individuals;*
- **Case Study-** *development of in-depth knowledge about a single case or related group of cases.*

While it may be appropriate for some questions to rely on one strategy, for others Robson argues that a more complex approach may be appropriate:

Do not feel straight jacketed into simply choosing one of these three approaches 'off the shelf'. It may well be appropriate to have a rather different style- perhaps a hybrid which combines aspects of two or three of the traditional strategies. Or a study might combine them, including, say, both a survey and one or more case studies.

(Robson, *ibid.*, p. 39)

For the purposes of this thesis an approach that relies on a hybrid strategy seems more likely to provide helpful insights into complex research questions.

4.3.1 Qualitative versus Quantitative research?

Each strategy outlined by Robson (1997) falls naturally into a research paradigm. The epistemological position of each paradigm favours a methodology most likely to provide answers acceptable to the given paradigm. In turn, epistemological differences lead to methodological differences. These can broadly be summarized as either qualitative or quantitative. In the past these divisions have been held responsible for the dichotomy within the social sciences, although more recently some researchers have taken their difference as primarily technical rather than epistemological (Robson, 1997). However, whether at a epistemological or technical level one can identify differences in terms of content, the methods used to collect data and process, the order and relationship between events. In the following discussion, first, quantitative and qualitative approaches are compared and contrasted. Second the relationship between them is considered and third, the implications for this study are explored.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) claim differences between quantitative and qualitative research are:

*Reflect[ed] in commitments to different styles of research,
different epistemologies, and different forms of representation.
Each work is governed by its own classics... interpretation,
trustworthiness, and textual evaluation... Qualitative researchers*

use ethnographic prose, historical narratives, first person accounts, still photographs... Quantitative researchers use mathematical models, statistical tables, and graphs and usually write about their research in impersonal, third-person prose.

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 10)

Thus, quantitative studies attempt to analyse and measure causal relationships between variables. In contrast, qualitative researchers attempt to address questions examining *“how social experience is created and given meaning”* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). The quantitative researcher may argue his/her work is conducted on a value-free basis while a qualitative counterpart might tend to highlight the socially constructed nature of reality and *“the intimate relationships between the researcher and what is studied”*, therefore emphasizing the *“value-laden nature of enquiry”* (Denzin and Lincoln, *ibid*, p. 8). Strategies such as survey and experiment often lend themselves to quantitative research. Robson outlines quantitative research as:

Starting with a theory. A theory that is a general statement that summarises and organizes knowledge by proposing a general relationship between events- if it is a good one it will cover a large number of events and predict events that have not yet occurred or been observed.

(Robson, 1997, p. 19)

In contrast to the quantitative approach, in qualitative research concepts and theories tend to evolve during the process, often as a result of data collection rather than as a precursor. So a quantitative approach engages in hypothesis or theory testing while a qualitative approach lends itself towards hypothesis or theory construction or generation (de Vaus, 1996). A second major difference between the approaches is in the relationship between data collection and analysis. In quantitative studies they tend to be linear with analysis following data collection. In qualitative research the processes are interactive and cyclical (Robson, *ibid.*). Janesick (2000) argues the qualitative researcher engages in enquiry as a social activity in the search of understanding meaning, where the quantitative researcher is more likely to deal with large datasets consisting of numbers in isolation of the research setting. Therefore, Janesick (2000) concludes qualitative researchers are likely to ask different questions to quantitative researchers:

The qualitative researcher studies a social setting to understand the meaning of participants' lives in the participants' own terms. This contrasts with the quantitative researcher, who is perfectly comfortable with aggregating large numbers of people without communicating with them face-to-face. So the questions the qualitative researcher asks will be quite different from those asked by the quantitative researcher.

(Janesick, 2000, p. 382)

A quantitative approach is underpinned by numerical data analysis. It is likely to yield conclusions that can predict future events within a population (Robson, 1997). It is an appropriate approach to engaging in theory testing in order to provide high levels of generalisability. Conversely, a qualitative approach draws on the analysis of words. As an approach it is likely to provide deep insights into process and the nature of the context, with the ability to unravel hidden meanings and relationships within social organizations.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) provide helpful explanations to five significant differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches first outlined by Becker (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, *ibid.*):

- ***Uses of positivism and post-positivism-*** The positivist perspective argues that reality is out there to be examined, captured and understood using a quantitative approach. In contrast the post-positivist position is that reality can only be approximated through the development of a qualitative mixed methods approach capturing as much reality as possible.
- ***Acceptance of postmodernism sensibilities-*** This is demonstrated by the emergence of a group of qualitative researchers rejecting both positivist and post-positivist methods in relation to their own work. They consider these methods to be neither better nor worse than their own, only

that they tell another story. In contrast, the positivists and post-positivists would claim their methods produce good science free from subjectivity and bias.

- ***Capturing the individual's point of view-*** Qualitative and quantitative researchers are interested in the individual's point of view. However, qualitative researchers tend to examine the individual's perceptions through detailed interviews and observations rather than the administration of more remote, distant methods that avoid social interaction between the researcher and subject. Qualitative researchers often claim to gain an in-depth understanding from their methods, while the quantitative researchers may argue that these methods are fraught with difficulties including being impressionistic and lacking objectivity and reliability. Criticisms of quantitative methods include the view that researcher often fails to capture the individual perspective because of the methods used.
- ***Examining the constraints of everyday life-*** Qualitative researchers work within the everyday social world and regularly experience the constraints imposed by this world. Therefore, their findings tend to reflect the complexity and constraints of this world. Conversely, quantitative researchers work outside of this world, often not having direct interaction with it. Their work is often concerned with deriving generalisable probabilities from large data sets containing randomly selected cases in isolation of the context within which they operate.

- **Securing rich descriptions-** Qualitative researchers tend to be interested in detail and exposing complex processes and relationships within a particular context. For quantitative researchers this detail is often deemed unnecessary as it can hinder the process of developing generalizations.

Some methodological texts have chosen to separate qualitative and quantitative approaches largely on the grounds of epistemology (e.g. Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, Glassner and Moreno cited in Robson, 2000) while others are prepared to view their differences as technical and less problematic (e.g. Brymann, 1988; Yin, 1994; Robson, 1997). This suggests that a pragmatic approach to their treatment may be possible. Therefore two central questions must be considered. First, can quantitative and qualitative approaches be combined within a research strategy? Second, if this is possible, is there any merit in developing a combined approach? Robson's (1997) view is clear. He argues there are occasions when either a single 'scientific' quantitative approach is most appropriate and others where a 'naturalistic' qualitative approach will be preferred. However, he moves on to state that:

differences between the two traditions can be best viewed as technical rather than epistemological, enabling the enquirer to 'mix and match' method according to what best fits a particular study...

(Robson, 1997, p. 20)

In arguing for a technical rather than epistemological distinction it must be accepted that quantitative and qualitative divisions exist in terms of types of data and they must be treated in different ways but that they both can be usefully combined within a single research design. Yin (1994) finds the use of a combined approach particularly helpful when dealing with multiple methods in case study research:

evidence can be reviewed and analysed together, so that the case study's findings can be based upon the convergence of information from different sources, not quantitative or qualitative data alone.

(Yin, 1994, p. 91)

The next section turns to the issue of developing a research design that is likely to deliver reliable and valid findings. Thus, it outlines principles that support the collection of trustworthy data.

4.3.2 Establishing Trustworthiness

If findings from a research project are to be taken seriously it is important that it can be demonstrated that the findings are credible (Shipman, 1988). Robson argues that a number of criteria must be considered in an attempt to establish trustworthiness. On one level this is concerned with the honesty and thoroughness of the researcher. However, he also notes while integrity and good intentions are prerequisites of good research, they are not guarantees of quality research. Therefore, considerations are needed at a second level of the research itself and that two central issues are validity and generalisability:

There are fundamental issues... Two key ones are VALIDITY and GENERALISABILITY. Validity is concerned with whether the findings are 'really' about what they appear to be about...Generalisability refers to the extent to which the findings of the enquiry are more generally applicable.

(His emphasis) (Robson, 1997, p. 66)

For Hopkins (2002) validity reflects the internal consistency of the research, while reliability reflects the level of generalisability of the findings. The next sections consider the concepts of validity and reliability in more detail, in terms of their nature, threats to them and what can be done to ensure their incorporation into the research design.

Social science research texts often subdivide validity and reliability into four discrete tests (Yin, 1994; Robson, 1997; Cohen and Mallion, 1994). These four tests are commonly used to establish the quality of empirical social research (Yin, 1994):

- **Construct validity-** have the correct measures for the concepts being studied been used. In short has the researcher actually measured what he/she think he/she has?
- **Internal validity-** This type of validity is especially important for explanatory or causal studies rather than descriptive or exploratory research. It is concerned with whether the research has correctly identified the relationship between cause and effect. Has the researcher correctly identified whether X has caused Y?
- **External validity-** The extent to which findings can be generalized (this term is used interchangeably with generalisability).
- **Reliability-** This is demonstrating that elements or the whole study can be repeated and obtain the same results, therefore demonstrating a lack of error or bias within the design.

Researchers and writers of research texts have identified a number of threats to validity and reliability. Robson (1997) notes the complexity of determining construct validity often leads to an unhealthy fixation on this area. However, most

threats appear to fall within the failure to develop a “*sufficiently operational set of measures*” leading to “*subjective judgements*” being used to collect data (Yin, 1994, p. 34).

Yin (1994) notes that experimental and quasi-experimental research have paid the greatest attention to issues of internal validity. Robson (1997) draws on the previous work of Cook and Campbell in this area to list 12 threats to internal validity:

1. **History-** Changes in the participant’s environment other than those directly associated with the research.
2. **Testing-** Changes occurring as a result of practice and experience gained by participants on any pre-tests
3. **Instrumentation-** Some aspects of the way that participants were measured changed between pre and post tests.
4. **Regression-** If participants are chosen because they are unusual or atypical, later testing will tend to give less unusual scores (regression to the mean).
5. **Mortality-** Participants dropping out of the study.
6. **Maturation-** Growth, change or development in participants being unrelated to the treatment in the enquiry.
7. **Selection-** Initial differences between groups prior to involvement in the enquiry.

8. **Selection by maturation interaction-** Predisposition of groups to grow apart.
9. **Ambiguity of causal direction-** Does A cause B or does B cause A.
10. **Diffusion of treatments-** When one group learns information or otherwise inadvertently receives treatment intended only for a second group.
11. **Compensatory equalization of treatments-** If one group receives 'special treatment' there will be organizational pressures for a control group to receive it.
12. **Compensatory rivalry-** Improved performance on the part of the participants as a result of the research.

(Adapted from Robson, 1997, pp. 70-71)

When considering causal or explanatory case studies the threat of a third unidentified factor is problematic. The existence of such a factor may lead the researcher to incorrectly conclude that A causes B when, actually X causes B (Yin, 1994). Yin (ibid) also highlights the broader problem of making inferences as a threat to internal validity. In case study research each time an event is not directly observed the researcher is making an inference that a particular event occurred from analysis of interview data or another form of indirect evidence rather than directly witnessing the event first hand.

Robson draws on the work of LeCompte and Goetz to outline four threats to external validity that will limit the generalisability of findings:

1. **Selection-** The findings are specific to the group being studied.
2. **Setting-** The findings are limited to or dependent on the particular context in which the study took place.
3. **History-** Specific and unique experiences determine or affect the findings.
4. **Construct effects-** The particular constructs studied are specific to the group studied.

(Adapted from Robson, 1997, p. 73)

Generalisability is often raised as an issue within case study methodology. Yin (1994) highlights the assumptions made by critiques of this approach and counters their accusations:

*The external validity problem has been a major barrier in doing case studies. Critics typically state that single cases offer a poor basis for generalizing. However, such critics are implicitly contrasting the situation to survey research, in which a “sample” (if selected correctly) readily generalizes to a larger universe. **This analogy to samples and universes is incorrect when dealing with case studies.** This is because survey research relies in **statistical** generalization, whereas case studies (as with experiments) rely on **analytical** generalization. In analytical*

generalizations the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to a broader theory.

(italics rather than bold original text) (Yin, 1994, p. 36)

There are four common threats pertaining to the reliability of research (Robson, 1997). These come in the form of bias and error and can relate to either the subject or the observer:

Subject error and bias- These are concerned with changes in the subject's responses due to reasons unconnected to the research. For example, a respondent giving a different response at different times due to tiredness from lack of sleep (error) or attempting to give a response to help their teacher or the researcher (bias).

Observer error and bias- These are concerned with the observer introducing error or bias into the research. Examples may include inaccurate recording or interpretation of phenomena or inappropriate selection of subjects.

Overcoming the threats to validity and reliability

Within the social sciences there are a number of principles and associated actions that can be included within the research design to generate trustworthy results. This section deals with overcoming threats to validity and reliability. Yin (1994) suggests a number of tactics that can be used to counter the threats to

validity and reliability outlined in the previous section. These tactics can be employed at various stages of the research process.

Three tactics that can be incorporated into the research design to counter threats to construct validity are:

- Employing a multiple methods approach;
- Establishing a chain of evidence;
- Reviewing of draft cases by key respondents

Employing a multiple methods approach and establishing a chain of evidence occur during, and are core principles of data collection but reviewing draft cases by key informants takes place during the composition of the report (Yin, 1994). A major strength of a case study approach is the:

opportunity to use many sources of evidence... that all sources of evidence can be reviewed and analysed together, so that the case study's findings can be based upon the convergence of information from different sources, not quantitative or qualitative data alone.

(Yin, 1994, p. 91)

Such triangulation of sources provides a method of testing one source of information against another. Robson (1997) notes that both congruence and incongruence between data sources can be helpful:

Both correspondences and discrepancies are of value. If two sources give the same message then, to some extent they cross-validate each other. If there is a discrepancy, its investigation may help in explaining the phenomenon of interest.

(Robson, 1997, p. 383)

Robson also notes two important associated benefits relating to the quality of the data collected, and hence the accuracy of the findings likely to be reported if a multiple methods approach is adhered to:

the bi-products of triangulation of data are as useful as the primary purpose in validating information. It improves the quality of data and in consequence the accuracy of findings.

(Robson, *ibid.*, p. 383)

However, in cautionary vein Robson (1997, p. 69) also notes that a multiple methods approach does not “*constitute a panacea for all methodological ills*”, arguing that they may raise methodological issues of their own and in addition they can also be very “*resource hungry*” and therefore become impracticable.

Collecting a chain of evidence is concerned with how the data are documented and organized for the case study (Yin, 1994). This may be in traditional or computerized files. Yin also argues that in case study research there is often no separate database that is distinct from the case study report. Therefore there is no recourse *"if a critical reader wants to inspect the database that led to the case study conclusions"* (p. 95). Yin suggests that a database can be developed in the form of case study notes, case study documents, tabular materials and narratives but a detailed database does not negate the necessity for providing appropriate detail in case study reports. Hopkins (2002) uses the analogy of financial audit to highlight the importance of tracing information through the research process from data collection to final report. He argues the technique of 'audit trail' improves the (construct) validity of data. Schwandt and Halpern (cited in Hopkins, 2002) state the audit trail is important for two reasons. First, audit trail allows a third party to scrutinize the research and second it helps the researcher to manage his/her record keeping, thus providing quick access to information when it is needed.

A third tactic for establishing construct validity is to ask key informants to review the draft case study. Yin (1994, pp. 144-145) states:

This is more than a matter of professional courtesy...[and] the informants may still disagree with an investigator's conclusions

and interruptions, but these reviewers should not disagree over the actual facts of the case.

At this stage key informants may even provide new insights that improve the accuracy of the case study and therefore construct validity. As Yin notes:

*From a methodological point of view, the corrections made through this process will enhance the accuracy of the case study, hence increasing the **construct validity** of the study.*

(bold as italics in original text) (Yin, 1994, p. 146)

Yin describes three dominant modes of data analysis that can be used as tactics to overcome threats to internal validity:

- Pattern matching;
- Explanation building;
- Time series analysis.

Pattern matching logic compares an empirically based pattern with one or more predicted alternatives. Yin states:

if these patterns coincide, the results can help a case study strengthen its internal validity

(Yin, 1994, p. 106)

Pattern matching is applicable to both explanatory and descriptive cases although *"internal validity is a concern only for explanatory (or causal) case studies"* (Yin, 1994, p. 35). Yin outlines three types of pattern matching tactics that may be of use. First, *'non-equivalent dependent variables as a pattern'*. In order to establish a causal relationship within the data Yin (1994) argues that for each outcome to find patterns of the predicted values but not to find alternative patterns of predicted values suggests a causal relationship. The second type of pattern matching outlined by Yin is *'rival explanations as patterns'*. This tactic focuses on independent variables. It involved the generation of mutually exclusive rival theoretical propositions. Therefore, if one explanation is valid the other cannot be. Thus, the presence of one pattern precludes that of another. Yin labels the third type of tactic as *simpler patterns*. Here a similar logic is applied to a less complex situation, perhaps when there are only two variables involved. However, pattern matching as a tactic is no panacea. The procedures for this group of techniques involve no precise comparisons. Quantitative or statistical data may not be involved in the process. This may lead to a lack of precision within these tactics. As Yin notes:

This lack of precision can allow for some interpretive discretion on the part of the investigator, who may be overly restrictive in claiming a pattern to have been violated or overly lenient in

deciding that a pattern has been matched. Major improvements in future case study research could be made therefore by developing more precise techniques.

(Yin, 1994, p. 110)

Yin (1994) gives special treatment to explanation building as a strategy. He argues it is a more difficult second type of pattern matching. The aim of this strategy is to “*analyze the case study data by building an explanation about the case*” (Yin, 1994, p. 110). The processes involved in explanation building are similar to gradually refining a set of ideas by considering alternative explanations at each stage of the process. However, the process have not been well documented but Yin insists the final explanation is a result of a series of iterations:

- Making an initial theoretical statement or an initial proposition about policy or social behaviour;
- Comparing the findings of an initial case against such a statement or proposition;
- Revising the statement or proposition;
- Comparing other details of the case against the revision;
- Again revising the statement or proposition;
- Comparing the revision to the facts of a second, third or more cases;

- Repeating this process as many times as is needed

(Yin, 1994, p. 111)

The final explanation may have not been stipulated at the outset. This process relies on constantly revisiting the data to develop and refine statements and propositions. This on-going interaction necessitates an evolutionary rather than revolutionary approach to explanation building.

Yin points out that this technique is “*fraught with dangers*” (p.111) especially during the progression of the iterative process. He warns of the danger that an enquirer may be diverted from the original topic. Possibilities for minimizing this include employing a strict research protocol, establishing a research database and establishing a chain of evidence. In conclusion, he also advises one should constantly revisit the original purpose of the enquiry:

Constant reference to the original purpose of the inquiry and the possible alternative explanations may help to reduce this potential problem

(Yin, 1994, pp. 111-112)

The final analytic strategy that Yin (1994) outlines as a tactic to counter internal validity is time series analysis. Time-series analysis can be diverse in nature but Yin argues:

the more intricate and precise the pattern, the more that the time-series analysis will lay a firm foundations for the conclusions of the case study

(Yin, 1994, p. 113)

Time series analysis attempts to match a series of observed data points to a theoretically significant trend detailed before the start of the observation. These are compared to an also predetermined rival trend, against any trend based on a threat to internal validity (Yin, 1994). The ability to trace changes over time can be an important strength of case study research but the quality of such analysis is dependent on the detail and precision that have been used to record events.

In contrast to Yin, Robson (1997) takes a more general approach. He argues there are two strategies that can be taken to deal with threats to internal validity. First, one can tackle threats at the design stage of the investigation:

if you know what the threat is you can take specific steps to deal with it.

(Robson, 1997, p. 71)

However, Robson acknowledges the limitations of this approach in terms of knowledge and experience of the researcher and only being able to deal with a small number of predetermined threats:

this approach of designing to deal with specific threats calls for a lot of forethought and is helped by the knowledge and experience of the situation that you are dealing with. Moreover you can only hope to deal with a fairly small number of predefined and articulated threats in this way.

(Robson, *ibid.*, p. 71)

For Robson, a second strategy to fend off threats from internal validity is to use “randomization which helps to offset the myriad of unforeseen factors.” (Robson, *ibid.*, p. 71), although it does appear that the value of this strategy is limited to certain research designs due to both appropriateness and practicalities of implementation.

There are two important strategies for demonstrating external validity or generalisability (Robson, 1997). The first, termed ‘direct demonstration’ involves the researcher or a third party extending the results by conducting a further study. The second, termed by Robson as ‘making a case’ is dependent on successfully arguing the generalisability of the results by persuading others that:

the group studied, or setting or period is representative in that it shares certain characteristics with other groups settings or periods...

Or alternatively:

the kind of rich or 'thick' description provided in a well written case study report can make contact with more implicit and informal understandings held by readers who are able to see parallels with the situation in which they work or otherwise have knowledge about.

(Robson, 1997, pp. 72-73)

Yin (1994) suggests the use of replication logic to overcome threats to external validity. This strategy is analogous to that used in multiple experiments and if similar results are found in all cases replication is considered to have taken place. Yin argues that if six to ten cases are taken and the results turn out as predicted then this provides “*compelling support for the initial set of propositions*”. However, if the cases are “*contradictory the initial propositions must be revised and tested with another set of cases*”. (Yin, 1994, p. 46). An important element of this strategy is the development of a “*rich theoretical framework*” (Yin, *ibid*, p. 46) that can form the vehicle for generalizing new cases. If in the future a case does not fit into the theoretical framework it is necessary to redefine the theory.

Achieving reliability within research is primarily an issue of paying attention to detail and being meticulous in terms of organization. As Robson notes:

It is easy to guarantee unreliability. Carelessness, casualness and lack of commitment on the part of the enquirer help, as does corresponding lack of involvement by participants. Reliability is essentially a quality control issue. Punctilious attention to detail, perseverance and pride in doing a good job are all very important, but organization is the Key.

(Robson, 1997, p. 74)

Yin outlines two tactics, underpinned by the importance of organization that can be used to overcome threats to reliability, both of which have previously been mentioned. The preparation of a case study database has been mentioned in the sections of construct validity and internal validity and the importance of developing a research protocol has been mentioned in the explanation building section of establishing internal validity.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has drawn upon the work of researchers from within the social sciences to consider the issues in developing an appropriate research design and strategy for this research. Exploration of the possible alternative positions

outlined in this chapter has provided the researcher with some understanding of the epistemological and methodological debates within the social sciences.

For the purposes of this research a pragmatic position seems the most appropriate stance to adopt. This has facilitated differences between paradigms and traditions to be viewed largely as technical rather than epistemological in nature, therefore, allowing an appropriate research design and hybrid strategy to be developed that is likely to provide meaningful insights to the research questions posed in the introduction to this thesis.

In conclusion, the research strategy chosen to address the research questions relies heavily on case study design (guided predominantly by Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Bassey, 2002; Yin, 1994; Robson, 1993) with a supporting survey (guided by Fogelman, 2002; de Vaus, 1996; Robson, 1993; Bell, 1987). A multiple methods approach has been employed to collect a combination of qualitative and quantitative of data to provide insights into the nature of external interventions in schools facing challenging circumstances. The following chapter details the methods used to collect and analyse the data.

Chapter five

Methods

5.1 Introduction

The arguments developed in the previous chapter, drawing largely on the writing of Yin (1994), Robson (1997), Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and Hopkins (2002) have been used to inform the research design of this study. This chapter outlines the research strategy including the methods used to collect and analyze data. The chapter is structured into five sections. Section one introduces the chapter. Section two details the methods used in phase one of this research. Section three and four outline the methods used in the research and section five provides a summary of the chapter.

5.1.1 Background

This research set out to explore teachers' perceptions of OfSTED's contribution to school improvement in schools identified by the Department for Education and Skills as '*facing challenging circumstances*'. It was intended that the research questions and the empirical evidence collected pertaining to OfSTED inspection would form the basis of the thesis. The initial planned strategy consisted of two phases of data collection. The first phase can be described as 'theory construction' (de Vaus, 1996) and '*grounded theory*' (Glasser and Strauss, 1967):

Theory construction begins with a set of observations (i.e. description) and moves on to develop theories of these observations. It is also called grounded theory because it is based on observations- not simply armchair speculation.

(de Vaus, 1996, p. 12)

The second phase of the planned research intended to test out the theories and therefore could be viewed as a form of theory testing:

Theory testing differs in that it starts with a theory. Using the theory we predict how things are in the 'real' world. If our predictions are correct this lends support to our theory.

(de Vaus, 1996, p. 12)

The first phase of the research was to involve a predominantly qualitative case study approach and the second phase, a quantitative survey to test the case study findings in a larger population.

However, as the first phase of the research evolved and data collection and analysis began to work on an interactive basis it became clear that the emerging propositions concerned a wider remit than just inspection. Emerging findings began to suggest that teachers' perceptions of the inspection process had implications for external intervention in SfCC and school improvement beyond

OfSTED inspection. Consequently, it was decided to extend the data collection to explore a second type of intervention that differed in style and focus to OfSTED inspection, but remained focused on delivering improvement in SfCC.

The SfCC initiative provided the basis for this extended phase of exploration. In terms of the balance between pressure-support, internal-external control and top down-bottom up approach to improvement the SfCC initiative provided an example of a style of intervention located at a different position to OfSTED inspection and therefore afforded a good basis for comparison. The SfCC initiative was designed to be less pressurized and more supportive than inspection. Additional resources were provided in an attempt to provide higher levels of support for SfCC. HMI visits were also intended to provide additional support, while introducing an element of external control and accountability. However, a bottom up approach prevailed as schools were encouraged to use the additional resources on areas for improvement they had identified as important within their context.

The purpose of the extended phase of research was to gain greater understanding of teachers' perceptions of successful external intervention in SfCCs, from which principles of successful intervention could be developed and to investigate the nature of the contexts of SfCC in more detail. Therefore, the opportunity was taken to develop into the original research design a second series of cases before moving onto the survey. This extension necessitated a

shift of focus from considering only teachers' perceptions and experiences of OfSTED inspection to considering teachers' perceptions and experiences of broader external interventions aimed at generating school improvement in schools facing challenging circumstances. Thus, the initial research questions were expanded:

- *How do teachers working in schools facing challenging circumstances perceive external school improvement interventions?*
- *What forms of external intervention are most likely to generate school improvement in schools facing challenging circumstances?*

The quantitative survey became the third phase of research in the revised research design. It was redeveloped to test theories relating to teacher's views of external interventions and the SfCC initiative rather than only considering OfSTED as a mechanism for improvement. In summary, the three phases of the research were:

- Phase 1. Exploring teachers' perception of OfSTED in Schools facing Challenging Circumstances (case study, management conditions survey);
- Phase 2. Teachers' perceptions of the Schools facing Challenging Circumstances initiative (case study);

Phase 3. Teachers' perceptions of contemporary external interventions experienced by Schools facing Challenging Circumstances (survey).

The data collected at each phase of the research has fed into the evidence that has been used to address the research questions. The findings from phase one of the research were based on a combination of 56 interviews in 10 schools, a survey of all teachers' perceptions, the collection of documentary evidence and researcher observations and field notes made during visits to the ten schools. Findings from phase two of the research are based on 39 interviews conducted in eleven schools supported by examination of school and DfES generated documentary evidence and researcher observations made during visits. The third, and final phase of the research is based on a survey of all teachers in six secondary SfCC in one LEA. 94 teachers completed and returned a questionnaire for analysis. While it is accepted that collecting data from different schools and to some extent, within different time-frames has methodological implications in terms of the generalizability of the findings. The difficulties associated with gaining access to schools in challenging circumstances. The possibilities provided by gaining in-depth insights to a larger number of challenging schools was considered to be a worthwhile compromise.

In summary, the findings from this research are based on the perceptions of over 223 teachers (The 223 teachers do not include those who returned the

management conditions survey) in 27 SfCCs. The following sections explain each phase of the research process in more depth.

5.2 Phase 1: Teachers' Perception of OfSTED inspection in Schools facing Challenging Circumstances.

Phase 1 of the research was informed by two important factors. First, a literature review was undertaken which provided the backdrop to the research questions and methodology. It also highlighted potential implications for further policy, research and practice. This in-depth literature review was undertaken to support the development of a conceptual framework and generation of research questions. These research questions were further refined during discussions with a thesis supervisor, some headteachers and senior managers working in SfCCs. This phase of the research project investigated the following research questions:

- How do teachers perceive the inspection process in terms of improvement?
- Does inspection generate positive changes in teaching and non-teaching practice?
- Does inspection identify similar priorities for improvement as those identified by the school?

These questions were explored by adopting a mixed methodological approach (Denzin, 1978) employing interviews, survey and collection of documentary

evidence to obtain in-depth data in ten case study schools (Yin, 1994). Details of the approach are described in the following sections.

5.2.1 Identification and selection of case study schools

The selection of ten case study schools from a population of over six hundred schools identified as SfCC was potentially a challenging task, although the premise that one could learn from any case was adhered to (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). However, in order to reduce the number of schools that potentially could be selected to a manageable level two filters were developed. First, attainment was considered, that is only schools where twenty five percent or less of students achieved five or more top grades at GCSE in 1999 and 2000 were considered. This reduced the number of schools down to 378. Second, the date of the schools' last OfSTED inspection was considered. Only schools that had been inspected since January 2000 were considered. This had the effect of filtering out all schools that had not been inspected under the most recent inspection framework. This ensured parity between the most recent school experiences of OfSTED and comparisons of their reports. This second filter brought the number of possible schools that could be approached to take part in the research down to a more manageable group of 56 schools.

From this sub-population of 56 schools a third filter was employed on a pragmatic basis. For reasons associated with transport and financial resources, only schools from the broader Midlands area were to be considered for selection. This

area was defined as the geographical counties of Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, West Midlands, Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire. Finally, a short list of 18 schools was constructed. Throughout this process the mean percentage of pupils registered for free school meals after each filtration reflected that of the wider population as did the percentage of schools identified by OfSTED as requiring special measures. These two indicators in combination with range of school characteristics in terms of location and size ensured high levels of confidence that the final sub-group broadly captured the diverse nature of the schools in the whole population of SfCCs.

Schools were selected using a sampling matrix designed to ensure that the group of schools represented a wide range of contexts and variation in characteristics, therefore ensuring 'maximum variation sampling' (Maykutt and Morehouse, 1994) including:

- Schools located within a range of socio-economic and cultural situations (inner city, urban, rural, and mixed catchments, and those with predominantly one ethnic group and also mixed and multi-ethnic groups).
- Schools that exhibited a range of cultural typologies (Stoll and Fink, 1996)
- Schools with different leadership characteristics based on the headteacher (gender, time in post and previous experience)

Past OfSTED and HMI reports, performance data and internally generated improvement and development plans combined with the school management conditions survey (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994) were used to provide an insight into school context, effectiveness and improvement trajectory. Ten schools were chosen to be approached in the first instance with a further two additional schools identified as reserves. Initially each headteacher was written a personal letter from the researcher explaining the nature of the project, its potential importance, expectations of participating schools and the potential benefits for the school being involved in the project. This letter was followed up one week later with a telephone call from the researcher. A telephone contact schedule was used to outline the project, clarify points made in the letter and to note any contextual information gained during the conversation. In nine cases access for the research was granted by the headteacher. In the one case where access was refused external pressures and staffing issues were cited as barriers to involvement. Therefore one of the reserves had to be contacted, and this school subsequently agreed to take part in the research. (For a summary of the characteristics of schools taking part in this phase of OfSTED related research see appendix 5.1).

5.2.2 Data collection

Prior to site visits to the schools each school was supplied with copies of the management conditions survey developed by Ainscow *et al.*, (1994) to administer to staff, which the research was to collect during the site visit (see appendix 5.2). Also enclosed was a summary sheet with information about the project including

background, aims, and a statement regarding confidentiality and anonymity of interviewees and the school. Immediately prior to the interviews a sheet explaining project protocol and an interview timetable sheet were sent to each school with a copy of the interview schedule (appendix 5.3).

Small-scale piloting of the instruments took place with a range of teachers working in schools facing challenging circumstances in Birmingham. The schedules were discussed in detail with these teachers and minor modifications were made to eradicate ambiguities within the schedule. Data collection for phase one of this research took place during the early part of the spring term, 2001.

One-to-one interviews were conducted with headteachers on two different occasions. Group interviews lasting between forty-five minutes and one hour were conducted with senior managers, middle managers and classroom teachers. All available deputies took part in the senior management interviews. In order to ensure parity of management responsibility between middle managers across schools, interviewees were selected from the core subjects. In cases where this was not possible due to the post being vacant or other pragmatic reasons, potential interviewees were nominated by the headteacher and then approached by the researcher; this was also the case for classroom teachers.

In total 56 interviews were conducted, twenty individual interviews with headteachers, 27 group interviews with senior managers, middle managers and classroom teachers. School 10 had time-tabled individual interviews for the site visit. Therefore, a further nine individual interviews were conducted with a range of staff. Where possible it was ensured that interviewees exhibited a range of age, experience, time in post and balance of gender. All interviews were semi-structured in nature and based on the same generic questions. With the permission of the interviewees audio-cassette recordings were made and fully transcribed. The transcriptions were then returned to the interviewees for validation purposes. 54 interviews out of the 56 were recorded. Due to the sensitive nature of the research and their school situation the headteacher from school 1 and middle managers from school 2 requested not to be recorded during their interviews.

Where appropriate observations and reflections on informal discussions were recorded. The purpose of these notes was to capture informal discussions with staff and students in a variety of settings (see appendix 5.4).

Externally generated documentary evidence including DfES information, OfSTED and PANDA, reports were examined. In addition internally school generated documentation including departmental and school development plans, prospectus and newsletters were scrutinized to contextualise the interview data.

The management conditions rating survey (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994) provided a further indicator of school culture and its capacity to improve. These data provided insights into the levels of planning, involvement, coordination, leadership and communication within each school. They also allowed comparisons between cases and against nationally generated norms. The surveys were administered internally but with clear instructions and guidelines on their completion. Where possible completed surveys were collected during interview visits. When this was not possible self-addressed envelopes were provided and reminder letters were sent and follow-up telephone calls conducted. Surveys from seven out of the group of ten schools were either collected or returned for analysis.

5.2.3 Data Analysis

At the first level of analysis marginal notations were made on a selection of transcripts in order to identify categories to place data. In addition a '*context theme*' category was added in an attempt minimize the effects of data reduction. All interviews were then coded by hand and placed into categories to identify emerging themes (appendix 5.5). This formed the basis of second-level analysis. Matrices exploring the dimensions of hierarchical position against research issues were used to illuminate issues, themes and tensions within cases (appendix 5.6). A final level of analysis compared and contrasted contextual themes that emerged outside of the initial categories (appendix 5.7). This highlighted differences and similarities between cases (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Direct quotations were highlighted and selected to illustrate the key themes and trends within the data.

Documentary evidence and researcher field notes and were scrutinized to triangulate data gathered during interviews. Where these data were found to support interview data, levels of trustworthiness were considered to be high. On occasions where discrepancies or no evidence between the documentation and interview data were discovered further clarification was sought from a number of sources or in the search of rival explanations within the data (Yin, 1994, Hopkins, 2002).

The management conditions survey was also administered. This survey consists of 24 behaviours related to six management conditions. The school's management, teachers and support staff comment upon the frequency of these conditions. The data are presented as Likert scores. This involves scoring each 'rarely' response as 1, 'sometimes' as 2, 'often' as 3 and 'nearly always' as 4. A mean score for each statement is calculated. Scores of 1.0-2.0 suggest that behaviours occur comparatively rarely, scores of 2.1-2.9 suggest the behaviour occur occasionally, and scores of over 3 that they occur as a matter of course. (see appendix 5.8). For further details of this technique see '*Creating the conditions for school improvement*' (Ainscow et al., 1994) The analysis and commentary of the management conditions survey can be found in appendix 5.9. During this phase of the research data collection and analysis took place on an interactive basis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This enabled propositions to be developed, tested and refined throughout the process. Direct quotations were then used to illustrate the emerging themes and trends within the data (appendix

5.10). The findings from phase one of this research are presented in chapter five. The next section of this chapter considers the methods employed during phase two of this study that investigated the Schools facing Challenging Circumstances Initiative.

5.3 Phase 2: Teachers' Perception of the SfCC Initiative

This phase of the study was informed by two factors. First, the emerging findings from phase one suggested that in the main teachers did not hold the view that inspection had a significant impact on school improvement (Chapman, 2002). Second, the propositions emerging from data analysis increasingly were related to school improvement processes rather than inspection *per se*. Therefore, the questions pertaining to alternative sources and styles of intervention more likely to deliver improvements in SfCC were considered. Third, the timing of the end of phase one of the project was important. This was because the SfCC initiative was a contemporary, on-going intervention aimed at delivering improvement within a different style and framework to that of OfSTED inspection.

5.3.1 Context: the SfCC initiative

The schools facing challenging circumstances initiative was underpinned by a combination of theoretical and practical support. At a theoretical level two publications were developed. The first, a review of schools facing challenging circumstances with an analysis of international school improvement programmes (Reynolds *et al.*, 2001) and the second, a guide to improvement for schools facing challenging circumstances (Hopkins, 2001). A series of regional seminars were also held to present ideas and from the publications, share examples of pilot case studies and distribute information packs.

In terms of practical support a substantial level of resource was provided. Most schools received £70,000 but some already involved in targeted initiatives including EAZ received less (DfES, 2001). Each school had to provide a 'raising achievement plan (RAP) that identified how the money was to be spent and linked resource to outcome. This plan was not intended to replicate the school development or improvement plan, rather to be a document that emerged from it via cut-and-pasting or highlighting (Clark, 2001). Each school also agreed to receive a "*supportive HMI visit*" to discuss progress (Clark, 2001). This opportunity created the possibility of developing some propositions that could be explored in the context of the schools facing challenging circumstances initiative.

5.3.2 Generating research questions

Initially the initial literature review was broadened to consider literature relating to school improvement and leadership in SfCC. This updated literature review identified appropriate external support and increased resources as two key factors associated with the improvement of SfCC. Therefore, increased resource levels and external support provided the basis for developing five research questions for this phase of the study:

- What resources has the SfCC initiative provided to schools?
- How have SfCC invested their allocated resource?
- What is the perceived effect of the SfCC initiative by these schools?
- How do schools perceive the HMI monitoring visits linked to the initiative?
- How do schools perceive the LEA support for SfCC?

5.3.3 Identification and selection of the schools

Purposive sampling (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) was used to identify and select twelve schools. In common with phase one, schools were selected using a sampling matrix designed to ensure that the group of schools represented a wide range of contexts and variation in characteristics, therefore ensuring 'maximum variation sampling' (Maykutt and Morehouse, 1994) including:

- Schools located within a range of socio-economic and cultural situations (inner city, urban, rural, and mixed catchments, and those with predominantly one ethnic group and also mixed and multiethnic groups).
- Schools that exhibited a range of cultural typologies (Stoll and Fink, 1996)
- Schools with different leadership characteristics based on the Headteacher (gender, time in post and previous experience)

There were three reasons for not employing filters for this phase of the project. First, duality of purpose for the site visits meant that data for this research had to be collected in addition to data for other purposes¹. Therefore, control over selection of the schools and time frame for visits was compromised. Evidently, this situation is not ideal. However, it was considered a worthwhile compromise in order to get such privileged access at a particularly challenging time for many of these schools. Second, the DfES provided more detailed information regarding

¹ DfES evaluation into the schools facing challenging circumstances initiative

ethnicity, prior attainment, SEN and other characteristics relating to these schools. Therefore, it was not such an onerous task to select schools from the total population of 620. Third, for this phase of the research resources were not a limiting factor, so geographical location was not a consideration in the selection of these schools.

5.3.4 Data collection

Data were collected from eleven schools in England during the spring term, 2002. The location and characteristics of these schools can be found in appendix 5.11. A mixed methods approach combining 39 interviews of key staff in eleven schools combined with documentary evidence collected from these schools form the basis of the findings for phase two of this research. The following sections outline the methods used in more detail.

In parallel with phase one a strict research protocol and interview schedule were developed and piloted before the schools were approached to negotiate access (see appendix 5.12 for examples of protocol and interview schedule). Each school that was approached was willing to give access for research purposes. All schools welcomed the opportunity to tell their story and were keen to focus on the contextual issues linked to the school being identified as facing challenging circumstances.

Within each school, teachers with involvement in projects or interventions funded by the initiative were interviewed. In addition teachers who were perceived (by the Headteacher) as not to be directly benefiting were also interviewed. In total over thirty-nine interviews were conducted with teachers at all levels within the eleven schools. It was ensured that interviewees exhibited a range of age, experience and time in post and balance of gender. All interviews were semi-structured in nature and based on the same generic questions. With the permission of the interviewees, audio-cassette recordings were made. Selected highlights were extracted to use as direct quotations and where appropriate researcher observations and reflections were also recorded. Small-scale piloting of the instruments took place with the same group of teachers that piloted the tools for phase one of the study.

Available documentary evidence including data provided by the DfES, Raising Achievement Plans (RAPs) and OfSTED/HMI inspection reports were scrutinised in order to contextualise and triangulate interview data. Where available, school-produced documentation was also analysed.

5.3.5 Data Analysis

Full transcriptions were deemed to be inappropriate for a number of reasons. First, during the first phase of the research verbatim transcriptions were found to be very time consuming to construct. Therefore adding an additional phase of data collection to the strategy had left little spare time to complete full

transcriptions for each interview. Thus, full transcriptions were considered an impractical option. Second, the combination of researcher interview notes with (where permission had been granted) an audio recording of the interview provided the researcher with sufficiently detailed data from which conclusions could be drawn.

Data analysis was conducted in the first instance by reviewing the recordings (where available) and comparing and contrasting them with the interview notes. This process was repeated twice and on occasions three times in an attempt to develop deep understanding of the interviewees' responses. Important themes relating to the research questions were identified within the interview data (appendix 5.13). These were then triangulated with other data sources including documentary evidence obtained from schools or the DfES and researcher observations. As with the first phase of this research data collection and analysis was viewed as an interactive process. Thus during the field work propositions were developed, tested and refined (appendix 5.14). The resulting themes provided the basis for development of the case vignettes. Each vignette was developed from a combination of sources including interview data, observations, school produced documentary evidence and DfES generated data. The findings from this phase of the research are presented in chapter seven. The third phase of this research conducted in the thesis consisted of the survey of teachers' perceptions of external intervention. The following section outlines the details of how this phase of the research was conducted.

5.4 Phase 3: Survey of teachers' perceptions of external interventions experienced by Schools facing challenging circumstances.

Phase three of the research aimed to test the findings from phases one and two within a wider population of teachers. The emerging themes and issues from previous phases of the study informed the survey design that consisted of four sections:

- OfSTED and school improvement;
- SfCC initiative and school improvement;
- External intervention and school improvement;
- About yourself.

5.4.1 Sample design

All 389 teachers in six SfCCs in an urban Midlands LEA were surveyed. A number of factors influenced this strategy. First, the chosen LEA has schools situated in a variety of socio-economic contexts that broadly reflect the range found within the wider population of all schools identified as SfCC. Second, all schools identified by the DfES within the LEA agreed to administer the survey. Third, while the number of schools involved in the survey may be small, this study set out to explore teachers' perceptions of external interventions. Therefore it was beneficial to survey a higher number of teachers in fewer schools rather than *vice versa*.

The questionnaire was designed according to the guidelines suggested by Robson (1997, pp. 247-249) and piloted with the same group of teachers that piloted tools for phases one and two of this research. Minor alterations to the order of questions and the structure of the survey were made as a result of the pilot study. An example questionnaire and supporting letter can be found in appendix 5.15.

5.4.2 Establishing contact and gaining support for the survey

The researcher made an initial telephone call to all schools in order to gain permission from the Headteacher to administer the survey. During this telephone call the purpose of the survey was discussed and the practical considerations addressed. The researcher delivered the surveys and protocols to each school by hand, making an effort to meet the designated link person that had been nominated to administer the survey within the school. The researcher made several phone calls to the nominated person to check that the questionnaires had been administered. When they had been administered a collection date was agreed and the researcher went to each school to collect them by hand.

5.4.3 Data analysis

The survey responses were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). This programme generated descriptive statistics outlining the distribution of responses for each question. In addition to the production of

descriptive statistics significance tests were also employed in an attempt to highlight significant relationships between different variables.

The first test, the Mann-Whitney U test is used to test for differences between two independent groups on a dependent-ordered variable and its calculation is based on ranked scores. Ordered questions such as attitude questions with a five point scale mean that although the number 5 means more than 4 and 4 means more than 3 etc, the number does not mean anything in quantifiable terms ie 2 is not twice as much as 1, only more than 1. This is different to an interval variable (for example height and weight) where the measure does mean exactly that (for example 2 is twice as much as 1). The Mann-Whitney U test is a non-parametric test. That is, it does not assume the distribution of the dependent variable (the attitude questions on a five-point scale) are normally distributed.

The Mann-Whitney U test is equivalent to the t-test, which is a parametric test for differences between two groups and assumes the dependent variable is an interval type variable normally distributed (for example height and weight for a certain age). The Mann-Whitney U test is used in this thesis to test the independent biographic variables with two groups such as gender, subject area (core and non-core), years in school (0-6 years, 7+ years) etc, against responses in the ordered attitude questions in sections A, B and C which are on a five point scale.

The second test used, Kruskal-Wallis test is a *non-parametric* test and is equivalent to the Mann-Whitney U test but is used to test between *more than two* groups for the independent variable.

Finally, Cross tabulation and Chi-Square were used to test for differences in distribution of frequencies between any two categorised variables. It can test between any number of groups. The groups (usually biographic) have no order (for example race or religion). The basis of the test is to see if the observed frequencies for the cells in the contingency tables comparing any two categorised variables (eg. gender and position in school) are significantly different from that which would be expected to occur if the cell frequency distributions were purely random. The larger the frequency counts in each cell in the contingency table the more likely you are to find significant differences. The formula for Chi-square is:

$$\chi^2 = \sum [(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e]$$

where f_o is the observed frequency count and f_e is the expected frequency count for the cells if the differences in the cells were purely random. The formula is summed for each cell in the contingency table. The bigger the difference between f_o and f_e the bigger the Chi-square value is and hence the more significant the differences between the groups tested. The formula $((NC-1) \times (NR-1))$ (where NC is the number of columns in the contingency table and NR is the number of rows) is used to calculate the degrees of freedom of each table, which in turn

dictate the significance of any relationships. The significant findings from phase three of the research are presented in chapter seven.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has provided details of the methods used to collect data at each of the research phases in this thesis. In summary, this chapter outlines a research design underpinned by the principles of 'third wave' school improvement (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001). Overall, the research has attempted to understand process and contextual issues related to the research questions. The overarching strategy has been to develop a methodology with the potential to deliver valid findings which can be transferred across different contexts, and therefore exhibit a degree of generalisability.

The research adopted a mixed methods approach drawing on both qualitative and quantitative paradigms. Case study and survey methodologies have adopted individual and group interviews, documentary evidence, informal observations, field notes and questionnaires to explore the perceptions of over 223 teachers working in 27 different SfCC. This detailed and wide ranging evidence from these teachers in these different schools has formed the basis for the findings of this research.

The findings from each phase of this research are presented in the following three chapters. The next chapter, chapter six reports the findings from phase one of this research.

Chapter Six

Phase 1 OfSTED and Schools facing Challenging Circumstances: Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, reactions and responses towards the OfSTED inspection process. The findings are based on over fifty interviews conducted in ten schools identified as facing challenging circumstances combined with analysis of the Management Conditions Survey and available documentary evidence (see chapter five for details of methods).

The themes and issues in the data collected from ten schools (S1-S10) are illustrated with direct quotations from classroom teachers (CT), middle managers (MM), senior managers (SM) and headteachers (HT). Numbers have been assigned to codes to identify individuals at the same level within a school. This chapter is structured into five sections. The first reports the findings relating to teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the process. The second reports the findings relating to teachers' reactions and responses to the process. The fourth explores OfSTED as an example of accountability driven improvement and in conclusion the fifth section summarises the key points made in this chapter.

6.2 Perceptions and attitudes towards the inspection process

Of all the categories of teachers interviewed headteachers and senior managers held the most positive perceptions of the inspection process. However, they also

recognised a number of limitations of the framework as a mechanism for improvement:

Where you're a school in challenging circumstances that you've then got the official means by which to act. In some circumstances it's quite difficult to galvanise your staff into action. Now if you need that tool, if you need that power, then it [OfSTED] gives you that... There is a focus on teaching and learning in OfSTED but the monitoring process for that is a too short time frame to actually allow for you to analyse the thing properly. (HT, S2)

Another head commented on the audit power of OfSTED:

It's huge amount of detailed research that you can use as a school to take the place forward and raise attainment. (HT, S3)

The Head of S10 thought that OfSTED had helped the school to focus on the issues needed to raise achievement within the school. Although this head also recognised it was “shattering” experience at the time:

It actually focuses on issues that need to be addressed in the school. To raise achievement of youngsters, and although it's shattering at the time you begin to get over that and as you move

through a phase of development through OfSTED or special measures or whatever, you are getting that development process working and trying to move forward...the after effects of the OfSTED process focuses the school on its prime business which we've always said is the teaching and learning, the quality of staff, their expertise, their ability to teach and perform in the classroom. (HT, S10)

A senior manager also agreed OfSTED was necessary but went on to highlight the differences in the type of inspection team that carried out the inspection:

I think there is a need for it [inspection], yes. I think it was far more useful for advisors and HMI to do rather than the OfSTED team we got. (SM3, S2)

A senior manager from another school also recognised the importance of OfSTED but as with other interviewees implied that there were other less favourable elements of the process:

I do not think that the school would be in the position that it is now without the pressure of OfSTED behind them... I thought that the whole process of special measures, I would not recommend it to anyone should have it, but in terms of the

school it was probably more powerful than the recent OfSTED we had. (SM1, S7)

The data suggest a relationship between hierarchical position and whether teachers consider OfSTED a useful tool for improvement. Senior managers were more positive about the inspection process than middle managers and teachers. A middle manager felt that the inspectors failed to identify important issues within the school:

I thought that there were a lot of issues, both good and bad that the OfSTED report hadn't even touched on here... it didn't focus very deeply on issues which affected the school. (MM2, S10)

While a classroom teacher accepted that there was a benefit to the school during the preparation period, he articulated the negative aspects of the process experienced during the post inspection period:

You can see the benefit for the school in the period leading up to it, all the preparation and obviously within the week you want the best performance within the school. I wonder about the cost to that...because in the post OfSTED time you see just how draining it has been for staff and pupils and I wonder whether it is actually the most effective way of examining a school. (CT2, S7)

Another class teacher reported:

Since there's no conversation and then it's hidden in the report, of which an edited bit arrives in our pigeonholes some time later, there is no way that you can inflate on that and then improve your practice. And so for that reason I don't think that it's [OfSTED inspection] positive. It certainly does not improve our teaching.
(CT3, S3)

The findings within this key theme highlight a number of important issues. First, senior managers in SfCC tend to consider OfSTED inspection to contribute to school improvement more than middle managers and teachers. Second, teachers working at all levels within the school recognise negative aspects of the inspection process. Third, senior managers are aware of some tensions created by OfSTED inspection. In summary these findings suggest that while OfSTED has the potential to support organisational development it is perceived as largely detrimental to individuals within an organisation.

The evidence collected suggests that teachers at all levels recognised the importance of the successful leadership and management of the inspection process by the school. Schools in the study did not underestimate the significance of OfSTED inspections. Teachers reported that the proactive

management of the process was an important factor contributing to success. Senior teams reported that they attempted to minimise their vulnerability to variability of inspection teams or poor timing of an inspection through rigorous planning and thorough preparation of staff. There was agreement that the way the school leadership team developed relationships and interacted with the inspection team was important. As one middle manager reported:

They are critical times [OfSTED inspections and HMI visits] for the head and he will do everything within his power to present the school in the best light. (MM1, S7)

How the headteacher and senior management led the school was considered to be important by all levels of staff. One classroom teacher reported:

The school is led and guided and driven by the fact that he is an OfSTED inspector, he knows exactly what OfSTED want to see that's what he did when he came in, he set it up that way. (CT1,S2)

Headteachers themselves often commented on the importance of leadership in relation to the inspection process. One Headteacher spoke of the concept of a

‘super-head’:

I do not believe in the concept of the super-head. I wish I did, you know... I think that heads make an enormous difference in the way they do the job but not in those simplistic terms. (HT S7)

The necessity for strong leadership during the inspection process was a common theme. Another headteacher reported they used a more autocratic leadership style during critical times within the inspection process, although they reported this was not their preferred leadership style, nor perceived as necessarily good for the school:

Your leadership style does vary according to circumstance...That [being placed in serious weaknesses ten weeks after being appointed] necessitated being a little more temporarily introspective...to work with key high level personnel inside the school and authority (HT, S6)

In this case the consequences of a 'poor' inspection and therefore external pressure to effect change quickly were cited as reasons for a more autocratic approach.

It would have been nice to involve the staff right from the outset and say let's talk about this. I couldn't do that...it was a bit "close the door and get on with it". (HT, S6)

Senior managers acknowledged the sense of threat generated by OfSTED inspection that some teachers reported. In an attempt to counter this they spoke of the need to support staff through the process. However, ultimately they were clear that not to change or improve was unacceptable. One senior manager observed:

If an HMI condemns you as a bad teacher the heavens will not fall in on you as a result of saying this. I think that that was very important in terms of keeping staff suitably relaxed and motivated. On the other hand it is very clear that a school that is on special measures that don't make improvements, there is the potential there for quite serious consequences. And I think that was necessary. I cannot conceive that people did not see that the change was necessary. (SM1, H7)

The longer-term implications for approaches to leadership and post inspection improvement were also considered to be important. The post-inspection phase after judgements had been made, key issues discussed and action plans developed was often cited as a critical time where a school could either move on and address areas for development or alternatively experience a period of stasis. One classroom teacher reported:

Although the OfSTED itself is over, the pinnacle of the danger has gone, but it sort of drifts back down again after OfSTED and I think that almost the post OfSTED time is in many ways more critical because it is what the headteacher or the team do as a response to points raised by the OfSTED... It is very easy to rest and say that you've got through the OfSTED or you have got through special measures, but what do the management team do next or what do all of us do next. (CT1, S7)

The key findings relating to leadership and management of the inspection process suggests that how headteachers in SfCC lead the process is considered to be important. Additionally, the leadership of the inspection process by headteachers can be more autocratic than they would like at certain times. Also, senior managers recognize the importance of supporting staff throughout the process and beyond into the post inspection phase. The data suggests that

teachers perceive that changes made to the inspection framework have resulted in inspectors modifying their practices. Perhaps more importantly, teachers at all levels recognised these changes as a positive element of OfSTED inspections. A senior manager reported:

OfSTED itself has changed, OfSTED has changed dramatically...the bottom line is that it is more user friendly...there's a dialogue and it's not a case of you are doing x, y and z wrongly, get on and sort it out, they're making suggestions and that's much more helpful...the staff are having immediate feedback at the end of the lesson and I think that that really boosted the staff to have that feedback. (SM1, S4)

One classroom teacher reported “OfSTED are trying to move forward by involving and discussing issues with teachers.” while another highlighted the importance of feedback from inspectors as a positive development:

The actual inspection was very different to the one that we had in the school previously. It seemed less cold, less icy. It seemed that people were more willing to make time and talk to you more about things and discuss...before it was a case of arriving with a clipboard and writing things down and then off they went. But this

time there was a chance to discuss things, which was much better. (CT2, S7)

A middle manager from another school reported:

I found the second one better and the third one best of all because the rules had changed and they [OfSTED inspectors] could speak to you at the end of the lesson and tell you what they thought and I found that very, very beneficial. (MM1, S8)

These findings suggest that teachers recognise changes in inspectors practices over time. However, despite positive perceptions relating to changes in the inspection framework there is evidence within the data of genuine concern regarding the variation in quality of inspectors both within and between teams. These concerns are particularly prevalent regarding quantity and quality of formative feedback received by individuals and the extent to which inspection teams understand and compensate for the school context.

All ten case study schools have direct current or historical experiences of being labelled as “special measures” and or “serious weaknesses”. Therefore many interviewees had direct experience as life as a teacher in a school deemed to be either “at risk” or “failing”. It quickly became apparent that each school and individual had developed a complex history and intimate relationship with the

OfSTED inspection process, OfSTED inspectors and HMIs. However, these findings suggest there are common themes and issues that transcend individual and school experiences.

At classroom teacher and middle management level it was generally recognised that pupils were not getting their entitlement to a high quality education in the school as currently performing (DfES, 2001). At senior management level most schools recognised the school required external intervention to provide the impetus for change. Therefore, all these schools to varying degrees accepted that external support for improvement was required. Some of the benefits of the processes of special measures and serious weaknesses were articulated as additional funding, while indicators of improvements included improved attendance, behaviour and an increase in first choice applications. One headteacher cited the removal from special measures as a very important part of the process:

The coming out of special measures was important to us because it was a stage in our recovery that was very positive. (HT, S7)

While interviewees could identify some benefits of inspection and being categorised as 'failing', there was also widespread criticism of this policy. Teachers reported the policy of 'naming and shaming' and intensive monitoring through lesson observations were "*unnecessarily inhumane*" perceiving them as a

barrier rather than facilitator to improvement. A middle manager of a successful department in a school (S3) recently placed in serious weakness felt that the labelling policy was unfair because it did not take into account departmental variance:

There was a feeling within the department that...we've got good results, we've got good everything but we are still going to be in serious weaknesses, with all the extra work and pressure that that's going to cause and we've done our bit. (MM1, S3)

A middle manager from another school echoed these sentiments:

It [failure] was clearly identified as being maths and science here and yet everybody gets tarred with the same brush and that's a shame. And it takes the morale out of people. (MM3, S1)

The judgements leading to schools being placed on special measures or serious weaknesses also were considered to be inconsistent. One school (S5) had recently escaped special measures although 'off the record' staff at all levels felt that special measures would have been the appropriate judgement. They argued that the schools' context was taken too readily into account and that the inspection team failed to identify ineffective and failing internal features of the organisation. Conversely, senior leaders from another school (S1) argued that

they had unfairly been placed on special measures and that serious weaknesses would have been a more appropriate process to support their plans for school improvement. The headteacher of a third school highlighted the importance of these inspection outcomes to schools and their communities as significant:

It was unfortunate that the OfSTED inspection report had been based on almost historical data...instead of making judgements on the things that had been going on since I took over... The OfSTED inspectors felt that by giving me that serious weakness label, this would be additional support for me. I disagreed, I still disagree because the impact that labels have for schools in challenging circumstances tend to be ones where you find yourselves in even more challenging circumstances because of a reduced public perception of your qualities. (HT, S6)

Another headteacher stressed the fragile relationship between success and failure:

Good HMI reports and OfSTED report, coming off special measures. Those things were on a knife-edge. All the things we have achieved are not that secure. (HT, S7)

In addition to concerns relating to the reliability and validity of inspection outcomes these data also suggest that combined policies of special measures and serious weakness are promoting a low risk culture where innovation and experimentation are being stifled. A senior manager illustrated this point:

You had to make hard decisions about what your focus was going to be...We said you can not actually do that... these are the things that we are going to focus on. (SM1, S7)

One headteacher's comments highlight the complexity of feelings and tensions that arise from labelling schools as requiring special measures or exhibiting serious weaknesses. First, the head describes the stress and pressure associated with being "named and shamed". Second, (in this case) the headteacher's response is to take on the challenge. Third, an element of frustration is detected as the school struggles to generate a rate of progress demanded by external agencies with little understanding of the school context:

It's very upsetting, it's very taxing when you get dumped into those particular categories but once you've been named and shamed as such you are going to do your very best to make improvements. The pace in which we do that has sometimes been seen by external agencies as slow. But working on the ground when you know the difficulties of your own institution and the ways in which

*you can actually move on, the rate of progress in a school like us
you can't stand still, there's no period of relaxing. (HT, S10)*

Another headteacher's reflections on the on-going relationship between their SfCC and OfSTED highlighted the acceptance of categorization by SfCC but also illustrates the fragility of some of the judgements made by OfSTED and some constraints of an inflexible process:

I was probably delighted for the first time in my life to get something serious rather than special, because special measures would have really damaged this school, because we were moving, we'd had limited time together as a senior team, there was a lot of good practice within the school anyway and the team made us serious weaknesses, but really we weren't... which was confirmed in the January, just seven months later on the first visit... [when OfSTED] said we don't need to come back here. So we actually had one visit, but as a result of that you can't come out of serious weaknesses until you've had another OfSTED, so we had one last week and here we are, now we are [recognised by OfSTED as] a good school. (HT, S4)

The findings pertaining to the labelling and categorisation of schools suggest that schools themselves find this an unhelpful part of the process that hinders rather than promotes their improvement efforts.

Senior managers felt that relationships were more positive with HMIs compared with their OfSTED counterparts. Lack of respect for OfSTED inspectors was a common feature of responses:

I have absolutely no respect for OfSTED whatsoever. For HMI I have a great deal of respect. (SM1, S2)

Experienced teachers reflected on the historical relationship with HMI in a positive manner commenting on the importance of professional dialogue:

When you had HMI in the early days you had a lot more dialogue and you could discuss strategies and the way forward. With OfSTED it is a snapshot you get the report and off they go. (HT, S8)

In the current climate relationships are developed with HMIs over time. Teachers felt that HMIs are more supportive than their colleagues from OfSTED and that regular on-going visits provided them with accurate perception of the life and work of the school:

The two day visits that lasted two years created turmoil but they got a much better feel for the school moving on through time but equally they kept up the impetus...It is almost like having an ally.

(SM2, S7)

Teachers at all levels perceived the OfSTED inspection process as a stressful experience. Headteachers' recognized the increased stress levels amongst their staff. One head commented:

It was an incredibly non-positive experience for a number of staff who found it hugely stressful, who felt the outcome less than positive and less than helpful. Overall I would not say it was a positive experience for the school. (HT, S6)

Pressure during the build-up to inspection was considered to be important in increasing stress. A senior manager reflected:

It was the most dreadful time for me, and I do personally get very nervous. I found the most stressful period I've ever had in my life was the lead up to it... I wonder how much damage it does to peoples' mental health and their physical health. (SM3, S8)

Another senior manager commented on the pressure during the build up period:

It is very stressful there is no doubt about it, in the month leading up to the OfSTED staff, rightly or wrongly, feel under a great deal of pressure. (SM3, S3)

Some teachers held the process responsible for stress-related illness:

I think that OfSTED creates a lot of stress and I've seen colleagues go under, under that stress and perhaps have had breakdowns, unable to cope. And that's a horrible thing to see especially in people you respect, people that are vastly more experienced than you, better teachers than you. (CT2, S4)

A middle manager recognised the pressure that inspection placed on the senior management team and how that pressure then is dissipated throughout the organisation:

I do feel that senior management themselves are under quite a lot of pressure...they're communicating that to us and putting us under more pressure than necessary. They've got this HMI inspection next week and they're throwing so much stuff at you that you can't get on with your normal teaching. (MM2, S1)

Another middle manager implied improved student behaviour during inspection week had reaffirmed his need to teach rather than manage children and therefore had encouraged him to think about moving to a less challenging school:

It's about job satisfaction. It is being able to do more and get more achievement. The best week that I have had here, the best by far, was the week that OfSTED came in because I was able to do some teaching and that started to make me think, you need to get out, yes, because this is what you are missing. You are missing being able to relax and chat and build up relationships. I mean that you can do some of this but it is very, very hard work. (MM1, S7)

The key findings relating to teachers' health highlight the extreme levels of pressure placed on teachers in SfCC. This is further enhanced by exposure to compressed inspection cycles and HMI monitoring visits. Teachers tended to associate inspection with stress and decreased motivation to work in SfCCs. An example of how teachers' health may be indirectly affected by inspection pressure is was found in school 1. On the day before a field visit to an apparently healthy teacher collapsed and died of a heart attack in the corridor at the beginning of lunch. This unfortunate event may be coincidental and unrelated to inspection pressure. However, it occurred immediately after receiving critical feedback from an LEA advisor's (second) lesson observation. Furthermore, these observations

were instigated as a result of the teacher being identified as 'failing' in the OfSTED inspection that placed the school into special measures.

6.3 Reactions and responses to the inspection process

Headteachers and Senior managers reported that they changed their non-teaching practices (practices other than teaching students) as a result of inspections. Some senior managers indicated that the inspection process had encouraged reflection and discussion. The headteacher of one school (S7) felt that the pre-inspection form was a powerful tool for reflection that had an important effect on the school by stimulating honest open discussion:

A lot of their [OfSTED's] questions [in form S4] are saying if you are doing this how does it affect your achievement... You really have to concentrate your mind as to how is this actually affecting achievement...So I think, I think, it is a very good document...that probably had more effect on us than the actual inspection... when we [school staff] discussed it we were totally honest, no audience, nothing. (HT, S7)

Another Headteacher noted how feedback had encouraged them to be more focused with action plans:

It was recognised in the OfSTED report that I was a good planner but I've now realised [after feedback from the Registered Inspector] that you have to be more focused with action plans
(HT, S3)

A senior manager implied that OfSTED was responsible for a change in her thinking, reporting that she was *'far more interested in making change happen much more quickly, much more quickly.'* However, this could not be articulated in terms of actual changes that she had made to her practice. Another senior manager reported that OfSTED had encouraged them to do more lesson observations:

I didn't do a vast amount of lesson observations... It is now my role to be in the classroom observing one lesson a week minimum. (SM1, S1)

Middle managers spoke of increased pressures of policy writing prior to the inspection. One classroom teacher noted that while classrooms had not changed dramatically paperwork and policy writing had improved:

A lot of classrooms aren't particularly different because you have to teach in that way to get any kind of respect and results from the kids anyway, but it's probably the paperwork side of it that has

been improved and we are probably where we should be as far as getting all our policies and things into line. (CT2, S10)

Middle managers and classroom teachers also agreed OfSTED drove the writing of schemes of work, but made no reference to re-writing or updating them as an ongoing process between inspections.

Middle managers and classroom teachers reported that the inspection process has only had a marginal influence on their teaching practice. Classroom teachers found it most difficult to identify areas of their own practice that had changed as a result of the inspection. A classroom teacher reported that:

There is nothing really that I'm doing different now from what I was doing before [the inspection]. (CT1, S7)

Another reported that:

I continue to teach the same way and OfSTED has not made any difference to that. I taught the same way after the last three OfSTEDs. (CT3, S7)

Most staff reported that schools were aware of the priorities for improvement identified by OfSTED before the inspection. The headteacher of school seven

reported that the process of inspection was more important than the inspection itself and that *“the inspection did not actually come up with too much”*. The two senior managers interviewed from school seven were adamant that OfSTED did not highlight anything that the school was not aware of and went on to add that they would have been *“fiercely criticised if that had been the case”*. A head from another school reflected:

I think that a head that said he or she did not know the outcome or what to expect from an OfSTED inspection shouldn't be in post. What it does is confirm or strengthen your view of the school. (HT, S2)

The three classroom teachers interviewed from this school also agreed that there were no surprises, but accepted that inspection brought things into focus and concentrated the mind:

I suppose it brings it into focus. I think that we are all aware of the things like attendance, the under achievement of boys in the school and things like that, key things that came with the report (CT2, S7)

There were not any shocks though, because it focuses what you already know.

(CT1, S7)

While the general consensus was that OfSTED did not highlight any issues of which the schools were not aware, it does not necessarily mean that schools were addressing these issues prior to an inspection. As a senior manager observed:

Very similar issues were being spoken of when I first joined the team... were identical pretty well to the issues that cropped up from the OfSTED inspection. The changes hadn't taken place quickly enough for their liking (SM1, S1)

Some middle managers interviewed were surprised by some of the issues such as the attention paid to schemes of work and some subject areas identified as being weak. One middle manager was disappointed with the inspectors failing to identify or not reporting issues:

There are things not mentioned in the OfSTED report which I thought should have been. Things that either they mentioned it, but said that it was OK. But you know on a day-to-day basis that it is

not. The issue of bullying... There was no problem. Which basically means that there is no bullying in the school. I am not sure that this is the case. (MM1, S7)

Another middle manager outlined the need for resources and ideas rather than identification of key issues:

We all know the areas of weakness, and we need resources, ideas etc. to help remedy them. (MM2, S6)

The key findings from this section suggest SfCCs are competent at identifying similar issues to OfSTED but whether these schools have the competency or capacity to address such issues remains unclear.

6.4 Commentary

These findings suggest that in schools facing challenging circumstances senior leaders adopt a more autocratic approach to leadership than they would prefer during the preparation for an inspection. The leader's perceived vulnerability of the school coupled with a strong sense of personal responsibility has led to an approach that promotes maximised levels of control within the organisation at what are perceived to be critical times. The rationale for this approach is to minimise the risk of being placed on special measures or identified as a school with serious weaknesses. The consequences of being labelled as failing can be catastrophic with far reaching effects in all areas of school and community life. There are important implications for recruitment and retention of staff and pupils, relationships with parents and the community and links with the local authority. Therefore, a central aim of schools facing challenging circumstances could be described as avoiding or being removed from special measures or serious weaknesses.

The findings also suggest that when schools in challenging circumstances are exposed to HMI monitoring visits, teacher relationships with these inspectors are more positive than their OfSTED counterparts. HMIs are also in a position to understand the complexities of context more readily due to multiple site visits to one school over a period of time. Arguably, if relationships are more positive and there is a greater understanding of context then the likelihood of teachers

changing their practice is higher, and therefore the possibilities for improvement greater.

Teachers reported that they recognise changes to the inspection process since its introduction, commenting on a more acceptable approach from inspection teams. However, they also perceive high stress levels, workload, and lack of job satisfaction as important outcomes associated with OfSTED inspection. High stress levels and workloads are increasingly being recognised as major issues, especially for teachers working in the most challenging contexts. If OfSTED is perceived as an additional contributing factor, this may have important implications for recruitment and retention in schools that are already most vulnerable to staffing shortages. Interview data suggest that middle managers and classroom teachers had the least positive perceptions of the inspection process. An explanation for this perception may be that OfSTED inspection has played an important role in increasing the accountability of middle managers and their departments. One example of this is lesson observations assessing the quality of teaching in each subject and another is the publication of an inspection report with a section dedicated to the description of the state of each department.

The contemporary literature base states 20-33% of teachers intend to change their practice as a result of inspection (Brimblecombe *et al.*, 1996; Chapman, 2001). Analyses of the interview data in this study compound this view of limited change. At one level teachers appear to view the inspection process as an

inevitable cyclical 'hoop to jump through'. Perhaps they are increasingly ambivalent to the process and over time have become 'inspection fatigued' or 'hardened' to the regime. If this is the case, now is the time to be developing a new model for external evaluation/improvement that can initiate and sustain classroom change more effectively.

While changes in practice appear limited, the interesting issues that these data raise relate to the nature of these changes. First, as one moves through the layers of the school from headteacher to classroom teacher there appears to be greater reluctance to change practice. This may imply that OfSTED is a more effective tool for changing management or non-classroom practices rather than classroom practice. Alternatively, teachers may be less able to identify, or prepared to report, changes in their practice. Second, the changes made to practice appear to be changes that could be generated without the expense and pressure of an OfSTED inspection. For example reflection and self-review could be local authority or consultant supported and the generation and update of schemes of work could be supported by a subject specialist CPD provider. Third, the continued OfSTED focus on classroom observations as a source of reliable evidence appears to be misguided.

In addition to the concerns raised by Fitz-Gibbon (1998) further doubt must be cast on the validity of lesson observation grading. Over time higher grades are being awarded yet teachers are reporting that their practice is not changing from

one inspection to the next. Fourth, OfSTED as a lever for change at the classroom level appears to be limited therefore a more productive and sustainable model for generating classroom improvement is needed. Over 90% of teachers that reported that they intended to change their practice as a result of inspection did so because of feedback from inspectors (Chapman, 2001). Variation in the quality and quantity of feedback received must be minimised in order to harness OfSTED's potential for improvement at the classroom level. One small step towards this could include inspectors offering a feedback 'promise' or 'minimum standard guarantee' to all teachers.

Arguably, these levels of change suggest that OfSTED inspection in its present form has only a marginal capacity to improve schools. Further questions need to be raised relating to the number and quality of innovations being developed within classrooms, and whether the existing climate can support successfully the experimentation and artistry necessary to engage pupils in meaningful learning.

The data suggest that the schools had an overall sense of the challenges and issues that they faced and actions necessary to address them. However, this does not mean that in practice they were being tackled prior to the inspection. Examination of pre-inspection documentation suggested that the issues were identified and being, or planned to be addressed before the inspection took place. Further work in this area is needed: the fact that an issue appears on the

development plan does not necessarily indicate the reality of the situation as there can often be a gulf between policy rhetoric and action in practice.

In addition to the data collected exploring OfSTED the contextual data relating to individual schools suggests (see appendix 5.9) that although SfCC have been identified as a homogenous group they appear far from uniform in their culture or capacity for change. Therefore it would seem unlikely that prescriptive, uniform approaches to their development would be likely to succeed. The nature of the contexts of these schools is explored in greater detail in chapter seven.

6.5 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from the first phase of this research. The findings provide important insights into teachers' perceptions and reactions to OfSTED inspection in SfCC. The seven key findings can be summarised as:

- Teachers in management positions have a more positive perception of OfSTED inspection than middle managers and classroom teachers in SfCC;
- Leadership of the process by the Headteacher and senior team in SfCC is important. While leaders adapt their leadership styles to circumstances the inspection process tends to pressurise leaders into being more autocratic than they would wish. Senior managers recognised the need to support

staff in an attempt to minimise stress but that reluctance to change would lead to serious consequences;

- Staff at all levels in SfCC can identify changes to the inspection process. These changes were viewed as positive in terms of inspections being more open and feedback more readily available. However, serious concerns remained regarding the variation in quality of inspectors within and between teams;
- The use of the labels “special measures” and “serious weaknesses” were considered negative and damaging to SfCC. However, in schools identified within these categories there was an acceptance that an external impetus for change was necessary;
- Senior managers in SfCC felt relationships with HMIs were stronger than with their OfSTED counterparts. Lack of respect for OfSTED inspectors was also reported by senior managers;
- Teachers at all levels in SfCC perceived the inspection process as highly stressful. Teachers made links between inspection, stress and decreased motivation to work in SfCC;
- Senior managers in SfCC reported they changed their non-teaching practice as a result of the inspection process. Middle managers felt pressure to develop policies and schemes of work for inspection purposes. Very few teachers could identify areas of their teaching practice that had changed as a result of the inspection process.

In addition to the above seven findings the management conditions survey also highlights considerable differences between these schools in terms of their capacity for change and school culture (see appendix 5.9). The following chapter presents the findings from phase two of the research. It looks at an alternative approach to improving SfCCs and the issue of the importance of school context for SfCCs is explored in greater depth.

Chapter seven

Phase 2 The Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances Initiative: Findings

7.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings from the second phase of the research. The findings draw on data collected from a second group of eleven schools (see chapter five and appendix 5.8 for further details) investigating teachers' perceptions and reactions to the SfCC initiative. The SfCC initiative was launched in 2000 by central government in an attempt to support the lowest attaining schools and those that faced particularly challenging contexts. The initiative included a series of regional meetings, the production of a literature review and improvement guide, the provision of additional funding to schools and HMI support (for further details see chapter three).

Data collection involved thirty-nine individual interviews with headteachers, senior managers, middle managers, classroom teachers, a learning mentor and a bursar. In addition to interviews observational data and documentary evidence were also collected. This evidence forms the basis of these findings (for further details of the methods refer to chapter five). This chapter is structured into four sections. Following this introduction, section two presents the key themes from the findings. Section three draws on six vignettes to illustrate the contextual

diversity of SfCCs and highlight common barriers to improvement encountered by SfCCs. In conclusion section four summarises the key points of the chapter.

7.2 Key themes

The findings from the case visits highlight a number of key themes. This section reports the key themes under the following headings:

- design and delivery of initiative;
- improvement strategies employed by schools;
- teachers' perceptions of impact of the initiative;
- external support for schools.

7.2.1 Design and delivery of the initiative

All eleven schools that took part in this research welcomed the additional funding provided by the initiative. Most felt that it was significant and had provided a mechanism for substantial improvement but a minority felt that the amounts involved (ranging £70,000 to £20,000 for others) were little more than “*a drop in the ocean*” (Headteacher, school G). There were mixed views relating to being labelled as a school facing challenging circumstances. Some senior managers tended to be apathetic about the use of the label. However, some teachers found it a positive label, and were pleased the nature and context of the school had been recognised but for some teachers the label of SfCC was viewed negatively. The main concerns raised focused on issues of staff morale and local community perception of the school.

The interface between the DfES and these schools was considered to be an area for further development. Headteachers reported that the initial launch meeting for the schools in December 2000 did little to encourage professional dialogue between stakeholders. Some headteachers felt confused by mixed messages, others felt patronised and deprofessionalised by the tone of the delivery. As a result of this meeting one of the LEAs in the study refused to send their headteachers to subsequent meetings; instead the Chief Education Officer preferred to attend in person and then feed back to schools locally in an attempt to *“protect the Headteachers from central government.”* (Headteacher, school D)

However, it was reported that subsequent meetings attempted to adopt a more collegial approach that led to a number of positive outcomes for those headteachers from other LEAs who did attend. First, they valued the networking opportunities with school leaders from similar schools to their own. These contacts have resulted in headteachers (and other staff) visiting each other's schools and sharing ideas and progress via e-mail. Second, the presentations from academics and the associated materials produced for these meetings were valued, especially the school improvement guide and the Review of Research and Practice (See meetings evaluation form appendix 7.1).

There was a wide variation in the quality and quantity of RAPs produced by schools in the research. Some schools produced a separate document in

addition to their school improvement/ development plan while others have renamed their improvement/ development plan as a RAP. One school (school H) visited appeared to have neither a RAP nor any other plan in place until the introduction of a new leadership team in the same term as the visit. Most schools had taken the DfES Challenging Schools Team advice and extracted a RAP from existing plans either by cut-and-pasting or highlighting relevant parts. Those schools that were most positive about the RAP were those where involvement in its generation had been maximised and the process of developing the RAP recognised as more valuable than the plan itself.

7.2.2 Improvement strategies employed by schools

The schools visited in this research welcomed the opportunity to spend the allocated funds on priorities for improvements that they felt were important. This contributed to a sense of ownership and control over school improvement priorities. Senior managers perceived this ownership and level of internal control as an important part of the intervention. However, as one moved through the management layers of the organisation towards classroom teachers, staff felt it increasingly difficult to talk about the intervention. Only in a few cases could classroom teachers articulate the level of resources allocated to the school. They also often needed prompting to initiate a discussion about changes that had been made in the school as a result of the initiative. The extent that each school could link the funds to specific expenditure was varied. Some schools were able to link the funding to the RAP and the resulting change or intervention. Other schools

have adopted a more flexible approach to the initiative, or the realities of school management had necessitated the merger of funds or their reallocation to different cost centres.

Due to the high level of internal decision-making relating to how the funds were utilised there was a wide variation in the types of improvement strategies that have been adopted. These strategies can be grouped into four broad areas:

- Improving resources and fabric;
- Improving structures and systems;
- Recruitment and retention;
- Continuing professional development.

Schools that invested heavily in resources and fabric tended to be the least well-resourced schools that had suffered from long-term under-funding. In the main these schools had not been involved in any government initiatives and tended to be located in what were perceived to be 'weaker' LEAs. Some schools had invested heavily in ICT resources while others had purchased large numbers of new and appropriately levelled textbooks. Improvements made to fabric included the painting and decoration of rooms and areas in an attempt to support the creation of a learning environment. This was particularly common in learning support centres.

Schools used some of the funds to improve structures and systems. One school used funds to restructure the senior leadership team (school J), while another school changed the structure of the pastoral system (school C). Changes made to systems varied from developing monitoring systems to identifying good and poor classroom practice to the introduction of systems (school A) to support pupil behaviours and academic progress (school D). Systems introduced by schools have resulted in the increased use of data to support pupil progress.

All of the schools visited identified recruitment and retention as a major barrier to improvement in SfCC. Consequently, most schools used a proportion of the resource to either recruit high calibre staff or retain good staff already in post. This had often facilitated structural change within the organisation.

Senior managers highlighted the importance of CPD as a mechanism for school improvement. Therefore, the schools have invested in the continued professional development of staff, particularly at middle management and classroom teacher level. Examples of good practice include close LEA support for some departments, involvement with IQEA (see chapter two for details), and work on teaching styles and multiple intelligence theory. Schools tended to identify a range of issues across the four areas described above. This has led to the SfCC funds being spent on a combination of strategies and resources across all groups that reflected the individual needs of each school.

7.2.3 Teachers' perceptions of the impact of the initiative

The schools visited as part of this research perceived the injection of extra resources from the SfCC initiative to have a positive effect. Interviewees perceived the strategies they implemented as a result of the SfCC initiative had contributed to improvement in four important areas:

- quality of teaching and learning;
- understanding and use of data, pupil progress and target setting;
- improved self esteem of pupils;
- reduction in staff turnover.

Schools viewed the SfCC initiative as an opportunity to improve the quality of teaching and learning. In most schools additional resources have facilitated the evolution of structures and systems for monitoring and developing classroom practice. The initiative has also generated time for these schools to engage in the process of change. Strategies implemented by schools included increasing non-contact time for personnel responsible for managing a change and using OfSTED criteria to conduct a programme of formal lesson observations in an attempt to strengthen the internal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. In other schools a more collaborative approach has been adopted by developing systems of peer observation and feedback. Teachers perceived that the observation of colleagues has improved their practice. The school involved in the IQEA programme reported INSET on 'models of teaching' had encouraged teachers to reflect on their practice, increased their willingness to experiment with a range of

teaching methods and developed a greater of understanding of the research literature on effective and improving teaching and learning. Where the LEA had provided focused support for the initiative through systematic lesson observations, teachers perceived this process to led lead to changes in their practice. There have also been examples of twilight sessions, residential and collaborative courses in conjunction with other schools that have concentrated on teaching and learning. Teachers reported that these courses have been of benefit and have contributed to the development of their practice.

In some schools it was perceived that the funds had provided resources that had facilitated training on the use of data and target setting and the implementation of structures to support the monitoring of pupil progress. Most schools were generating more data on individual pupils. These systems were being used to identify and target individuals and groups of pupils for additional support including mentoring, revision for public examinations and coursework completion.

It was reported that the initiative had led some schools to focus on the raising the self-esteem of their students (E.g. Developing learning support centres; colour banding; investment in ICT equipment; educational visits). This was considered to be very important especially in areas with high levels of socio-economic deprivation and in schools operating within LEAs operating a selective system of grammar schools and secondary modern schools.

Senior leaders reported that the recruitment and retention points allocated as a result of the initiative had helped to attract quality staff and reduce turnover especially in key positions. The major benefit of this was linked to quality of teaching and learning. It was perceived that lower levels of new or temporary staff increased consistency in all areas of the school and therefore had a large impact on raising the trailing edge of practice. However, many of these schools continue to have unfilled permanent positions that are being covered by supply staff. Newly qualified and younger teachers in South and South East England were very aware of this situation and some were proactively seeking to be 'head hunted' by other schools willing to pay them more or were considering to move out of the area due to the high cost of living in London and the south-east.

Teachers reported that the strategies implemented as part of the initiative had contributed towards an improvement in pupil behaviour. However, challenging behaviour continues to be perceived as an issue in these schools. This perception is held strongly by staff at lower levels within the organisation. Schools that have most effectively addressed this situation have chosen to implement systems aimed at improving learning behaviour rather than employing purely punitive regimes or over relying on other factors such as improved teaching and learning and improved levels of pupil self esteem. The tight systems employed have supported achieving high levels of consistency of implementation throughout the school resulting in lower levels of disruption in classrooms.

7.2.4 External support for schools

Senior leaders reported that the HMI monitoring visits were a useful experience, although perceptions of the process become less positive as one moves down the organisational hierarchy. Headteachers and senior managers reported that the visits “focused the mind” on the core issues of raising achievement and acted to “validate the RAP” (Headteacher, school D) and direction that the school was moving. The manner in which the schools perceived the visits to be conducted demonstrated wide variation. For some schools reported the manner of the visit was professional and carried out within a supportive framework. Others were apathetic towards the process and inspectors demonstrating a neutral position and one school reported that the visit was “threatening” and the HMI’s manner was “aloof”, “rude” and “unsupportive” although improvements in the inspector’s attitude was noted over time. Most interviewees, especially middle managers and classroom teachers felt that the visits created additional stress, pressure and higher levels of workload during the build up period to the visit.

The level and effectiveness of support for the case study SfCCs provided by LEAs also demonstrated wide variation. In some instances examples of best practice were reported. One example was an LEA working within a planned collaborative framework to improve teaching and learning in a struggling department and to provide advice and support for the senior management team. The majority of senior managers did have regular contact with LEA advisors and most middle managers received some superficial support for their departments

and often reported that they felt they could contact their subject advisor if necessary, although few claimed to citing response time of the advisor as a barrier to support. The vast majority of classroom teachers reported very little interaction with the LEA except in relation to whole school INSET led by numeracy and literacy LEA consultants. Some schools felt that the initiative had been a “wake up call for LEAs” (Senoir manager school J) that had previously preferred to ignore the challenging schools under their jurisdiction. Therefore, since the introduction of the initiative there have been some more productive partnerships generated. Unfortunately some schools perceived that their LEA did not have a substantial knowledge base or understanding relating to the theory and practice of school improvement, particularly in challenging contexts. In general, LEA support for the generation and implementation of the RAP was perceived to be weak.

7.2.5 Summary

The key findings in this part of the chapter demonstrate that generally schools welcomed the additional resource but were less positive regarding the initial meetings arranged by the DfES. However, they welcomed the opportunity to network with other leaders of schools facing similar challenges and to receive inputs from academic speakers. The quality RAPs were variable. Schools that were most positive about the RAP were those where involvement in its generation had been maximised and the process of developing the RAP recognised as more valuable than the plan itself. Interviewees perceived the

initiative had contributed towards improving the quality of teaching and learning, increasing understanding and use of data for monitoring pupil progress and target setting, improving student self-esteem and reducing staff turnover. The HMI monitoring visits exhibited a wide variation in quality. Classroom teachers and middle managers perceived the visits to be a more negative experience than senior managers. The quality of LEA support appeared to be variable. Teachers perceived this variation to depend on LEA capacity, skills, knowledge and understanding about SfCC. The next section draws on vignettes of the cases to illustrate the diversity of school context and perceived impact of the initiative.

7.3 Six illustrative vignettes

7.3.1 Introduction

This section of the chapter presents six vignettes of schools involved with the SfCC initiative. These six vignettes have been selected from the group of eleven schools that took part in the second phase of the research to illustrate three key areas of importance. Each vignette:

- offers an insight into the range of individual school contexts found in SfCC;
- highlights the range of internal and external barriers to improvement encountered by SfCC;
- highlights the range of improvement strategies employed by SfCC.

The six schools chosen to provide vignettes demonstrate a wide range of characteristics including: school size, geographical location, ethnic composition of students and nature of intake.

7.3.2 Vignette A

School A is an 11-19 mixed, split-site comprehensive school with approximately 1480 pupils on roll. The school is located in a north London borough. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 32% suggesting many pupils are from families with high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. The intake is mixed in terms of ethnic origin. 32% of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and 32% of pupils speak English as their second language. On entry to the school pupils' attainment is well below national average with 30% of pupils entering with a reading age of more than three years below their chronological age. A high number of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs (37% in 2000/1). Public examination performance has been poor, in 2000 20% of pupils left the school with 5 or more top grades at GCSE and in 2001 19% achieved this standard.

The school has had a recent troubled history. In 1998 the school was placed in the OfSTED "serious weaknesses" category by a section 10 inspection. Due to lack of progress in 1999 the school was placed on "special measures". The key issues for improvement included leadership and management, teaching and

learning, behaviour and attitudes of pupils, and special educational needs provision.

The school's previous headteacher took early retirement in April 2000. In September 2000 the LEA appointed a local experienced head on a one-year contract. It is perceived that this head galvanised the staff and raised morale. This has led to an improvement in relationships within the school. However, HMI reported limited progress was being made in relation to the key issues identified by the special measures process.

In September 2001 the current headteacher joined the school. He has begun to address the key issues identified by OfSTED. Initially the focus has been on changing structures within the school to support improvement and to develop leadership and teaching and learning. However, a tour of the school with a senior manager highlighted the variation in quality of teaching practice within the school. The fifth HMI monitoring visit highlighted this issue and in response the senior team have instigated a review of practice. The headteacher's response to the fifth monitoring visit (December 2001) states:

The main purpose of this review has been to ensure there is greater consistency within the school in improving the quality of teaching and in raising standards of attainment

The rhetoric of school improvement is strong amongst senior management and they tend demonstrate protective or defensive behaviour towards the organisation. An example of this is that access for this research was granted on the condition only the Headteacher and senior managers were interviewed. To date there is little evidence to suggest the school is making progress in terms of cultural change or pupil attainment within the school.

The School has received £70,000 from the initiative and contributed further funding from other sources to support raising achievement. The funding has been used to address the key issues identified by special measures. Targets are clearly set out in the in the RAP. The focus has been on five areas for improvement. First, CPD has been made a priority. One example was the introduction of a peer coaching scheme. Teachers who have been identified by HMI or other lesson observations as consistently 'good' are given the opportunity to act as 'teacher mentors'. This involved supporting less effective staff at their own request. The support may focus on particular elements of teaching or on the learning of groups or individual students. Teacher mentors provide a four session (lesson) programme during their non-contact time and are rewarded at a rate of £25 per session.

Another example of increased CPD activity is the development of middle managers. Middle managers have been involved with ten three hour twilight sessions, led by the LEA, focusing on the development of leadership and

management skills. Second, the majority of the funds (£50,000) have been spent on textbooks in an attempt to provide an appropriate good quality book for each child in each subject within the school. Third, in the lower school there are regular homework clubs and in the upper school there are subject specific revision clubs. Members of teaching staff are paid additional monies for providing these out of hours initiatives. Fourth, time has been used to discuss and develop a new curriculum structure where pupils start GCSE schemes of work at the beginning of year nine therefore giving students three years to complete the key stage 4 curriculum. One aim of this change was to enhance the opportunity for some pupils to enter public examinations at the end of year 10, creating time for pupils either to gain additional GCSEs or to pursue an extended vocational curriculum in year 11. Resources have been deployed to develop a broader vocational curriculum at key stage 4. Fifth, resources have been invested into administrative support to develop individual pupil targets, and monitor attendance and exclusions.

Members of staff interviewed welcomed the additional resources and reported that the additional funds had supported the school's own agenda for development. The headteacher reported that the literature review and the guide to school improvement provided at the DfES 'Summer Seminar Series' and the DfES Middle Management Training Package available to SfCC were particularly useful. These materials were considered to be well conceptualised providing both theoretical insights and practical suggestions to support school improvement and

the development of leadership and management of middle managers. The headteacher also commented on the value of these meetings, suggesting that they provided the time and space for important reflection and discussion with other headteachers. As a result of these meetings the head is engaged in on-going contact with other headteachers in SfCC and has visited two of them in their own schools to share ideas and good practice.

It was reported that the continuing professional development strategies have had a number of effects including contributing to the raising of professional confidence and competency within the staff through a collaborative framework. The twilight training programme has contributed to minimising the variation in quality of subject leaders. Middle managers have been empowered to take responsibility for the management and development for their subject areas especially in relation to the generation and use of data to set targets and monitor pupil progress.

The interviewees argued that expenditure on books and resources had provided teachers with the basic materials necessary to teach and supported the development of better quality homework being set. While the homework club in the lower school provided the opportunity for about 20 pupils each evening to develop their independent learning skills in a safe environment with facilities that are often not available at home. In the upper school about 6 pupils per subject session benefited from structured revision. Numbers were low but it was hoped

that over time as changes in student culture occurred they would improve. The success of these interventions will ultimately be judged by improved performances in public examinations. The increased administrative support has enabled the generation and collation of data from which individual targets can be generated for each pupil.

The SfCC initiative was discussed during OfSTED special measures monitoring visits. The SMT found this discussion useful and felt it focused them on the core issue of raising achievement. They also felt that the generation of the RAP was a helpful process and that the document provided a practical tactical plan from which to implement change. The school's perception is that historically LEA support for the school has been weak although it is now felt that both relationships and the level of support are improving. In addition to support provided through the twilight sessions, staff reported that they met with LEA advisors at least monthly but this was viewed as part of the special measures support rather than SfCC.

Middle management training was viewed as beneficial, especially in the development of a cohesive team and area of data management. The teacher-mentoring scheme was perceived to be a success of the school and should be further evaluated in more depth to assess possibilities for expansion and application into other schools. The core challenge for school A was to translate management ideas and plans into practice. One of the major factors limiting the

implementation of these plans was the variation in quality of staff employed at all levels within the school. This situation combined with the historically poor structures and policies within the school contributed to inconsistent teacher behaviour and expectations in different areas of the school. Unfortunately this has hindered the development of whole-school norms. Therefore pupil behaviour and attitude to learning is inconsistent and often very challenging across the school.

7.3.3 Vignette B

School B is situated in a selective Local Education Authority in southeast England. It is a mixed county modern school with approximately 600 pupils on roll. The pupil population is predominantly white English although there is a small percentage of refugee children, mostly from eastern Europe. On entry to the school pupils' attainment is well below national average and a high number of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs (45% in 2000/1). Public examination performance has been very poor. In 2000 only 3% of pupils left the school with 5 or more top grades at GCSE. The school serves a community with the highest proportion of 'looked after' children nationally and a local council estate, consequently there is significant pupil turnover and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average.

The school has had an unstable recent history that has culminated with a more stable year due to the appointment of an acting head from a local grammar

school. In the summer term 2000 the current headteacher was approached to take up a two-year fixed term contract. The contract started in September 2000 when the headteacher and two deputies (from the same grammar school as the headteacher) formed a new temporary senior management team at school B.

The main challenges for the new senior team in 2000 included developing an appropriate curriculum; raising staff and pupil expectations; improving the quality of teaching and learning; addressing behavioural issues and developing effective systems and structures within the school. Since the arrival of the new SMT there has been approximately an 80% turnover in teaching staff.

The school has received £50,000 from the SfCC initiative, a further £20,000 from the VEAZ and further SfCC funding via the LEA to pay for the staffing of 1.5 members of the SMT. The SfCC money that went directly into schools has been spent in several ways. £30,000 has been invested in the VEAZ 'emotional intelligence project'. This has included refurbishment and resourcing of the area and the appointment of an emotional intelligence facilitator specialising in working with disaffected and disruptive pupils. In addition, the facilitator has also provided staff INSET on aspects of emotional intelligence. The remaining £20,000 has been used to support the RAP. Areas of expenditure include: the development of library resources and ICT facilities (formally opened in March 2002); INSET on teaching and learning styles and behaviour management; resources for classrooms (eg. differentiated texts).

All of those interviewed were positive about the initiative and welcomed the additional resources. It was reported that competency in teaching within the school had risen. This was attributed to two important factors. First, the initiative had indirectly supported the displacement of weaker staff allowing the appointment of more competent staff with higher expectations. Second, it was perceived that staff INSET led by the LEA and the school itself had contributed to improved levels of teaching and learning within the school. However, it was conceded that progress is hard fought and there is still a wide variation in the quality of teaching.

The 'emotional intelligence' project has been successful in modifying some pupils' behaviour and their attitudes towards school. It has provided a sanctuary where relationships can be built and confidence and self-esteem raised. It also provided a place to talk so that tensions could be reduced. On occasions it acted as a safe place for pupils to reflect on their actions after volatile incidents. The project also allowed the most challenging pupils to work in very small groups and engage in positive learning situations aimed at improving basic skills and social development. An indirect effect of the project was reported as taking some of the most disruptive pupils out of classrooms. This had the effect of freeing up teachers' time to teach the rest of the class rather than constantly be managing the behaviour of an individual or having their authority undermined by ignoring it.

A new school library was to be formally opened shortly after the visit. However, at the time of the visit it was already being used until 6pm. This resource provided a positive learning environment where pupils could develop their independent learning skills either in their own time or as part of the taught curriculum. The area had been completely refurbished with new books and some ICT facilities. An extension to the area was planned for the future. Other plans included the formalisation of 'out of hours' revision courses for years 10 and 11.

The RAP served as the school development plan and was drawn up by the headteacher. The future of the school in its current form was uncertain therefore the Headteacher was reluctant to invest resources into long term planning. All levels of staff interviewed reported that they perceived the label of SfCC as a negative effect of the initiative. Areas causing concern included the effect of this label on relationships between the media, school and the community and the potential negative knock-on effect that this may have on recruitment and retention of more effective staff.

Teachers at all levels recognised the necessity for HMI monitoring visits and felt that they were useful in terms of helping the school to focus on development. The headteacher reported that the visit validated the RAP, arguing that this validation could then be used as a public relations exercise to raise the expectations and esteem of the staff, pupils and community. It was reported that the visits were conducted in a supportive manner but that they still caused high levels of stress.

Doubt was cast on the value of a one off visit and it was suggested that an on-going relationship with the same HMI would be more likely to support improvement, especially if they had recent experience of teaching in schools.

The school's perception is that historically LEA support for the school has been weak although it is now felt that both relationships and the level of support are improving. LEA support for the development of the RAP appeared confused, often conflicting with DfES guidance and time-limes. Advisory support was available, but at the instigation of the school. The responses to calls for support were reported to be slow. Staff suggested that in order to improve LEA support for their school more advisors with the capability and expertise to develop teaching and learning, strategic approaches to improvement and the development of middle managers were needed.

Those interviewed reported that the initiative had contributed the transformation in culture within the school. It was reported that the school now feels "*orderly and safe*" rather than "*volatile and reckless*" (Middle manager, school B). The focus on exam results was an area of discussion. One member of staff felt that simplistic statistics did not portray the school in a fair light because of pupil turbulence and an inflated roll. The headteacher accepted that to date the impact on GCSE attainment was disappointing but that the next steps to be put in place may address this. Suggestions for improvements to the initiative included the

provision of more resources to provide faculty administrative support, to right off any financial deficit when appointing a new Headteacher.

7.3.4 Vignette C

School C is a mixed community school with over 1400 pupils on roll. It is situated to the south of the city centre in a new town in south-east England. It serves a community with high levels of socio-economic deprivation, 36% of pupils are registered for free school meals. Over a third of pupils are on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register and 6% of pupils have a statement of SEN. The school has a stable senior management team, the headteacher has been in post for fourteen years and is driven by a strong sense of moral purpose and commitment to the community ethos of the school.

The school received £70,000 from the SfCC initiative. Resources purchased with this money include part funding for four assistant principle tutors (APT's) that had 18 non-contact periods rather than the usual ten hours. These tutors are part of the pastoral system and are responsible for linking pastoral issues including attendance and behaviour to progress. Formal senior emergency cover (100 periods per fortnight) had also been introduced as a result of the initiative. This ensured there was always a member of the senior team on duty to react to any issue that arose during the school day. Primarily, was used to support the creation of appropriate conditions for teaching and learning in classrooms. Resources spent on the curriculum included the creation of a year 10 vocational group (10VOC). This group is selected on low levels of ability rather than attitude or behaviour, although in many cases the least able pupils were also reported to

be the most disaffected. The group of 25 has its own base and is taught by stronger members of staff.

The initiative has been used to create time and space for school leaders to support classroom processes. The appointment of APTs has added a senior person to each house and reinforced the high profile approach to issues of attendance, truancy and behaviour management. The APTs act in a proactive manner, working with pupils, often over a period of time to resolve issues or modify behaviours that may have been identified through emergency senior cover. Counselling and mentoring were an integral of the APTs role. Interviewees reported that home school-links had improved as a result of the introduction of APTs because they had time to follow up issues and persistently call home either by phone or in person.

The introduction of senior emergency cover aimed to provide staff with immediate senior support when and where necessary. On occasions very disruptive pupils were removed by the senior manager. Alternatively the member of the senior team tended to remain in the classroom and team-teach or support the class teacher for a limited period of time during a lesson. All interviewees reported that this support had led to improved confidence amongst the teaching staff and had contributed to improving teaching and learning by minimising variation in the quality throughout the school. It remained the classroom teachers' responsibility to follow up any intervention from the emergency senior cover, in terms of sanctions through the appropriate procedures and structures. This may include

the intervention of an APT to work with the pupil. This scheme has also provided the senior team with the opportunity to conduct regular sweeps of the school where expectations and school norms can be reinforced. In addition it has also protected senior leaders' time for strategic planning during times when they are not on duty. 10 VOC was reported to have had two major effects. First, it gave 25 academically weak pupils the opportunity to succeed in a safe environment with good teachers. Second, there has been an impact on teaching outside of the group. Interviewees reported that the creation of 10 VOC had made differentiating work more manageable for other classes and therefore there tended to be less disruption during lessons.

The senior team felt that the process of preparing the RAP was a valuable experience. It initiated a wider debate within the school relating to teaching and learning, culture and their role in improving attainment. For example, in the science department discussion focused on setting realistic targets for individual pupils and what strategies could be used to achieve these targets.

Some issues that have arisen out of the strategies implemented at school C include a perceived increased lack of visibility of the principle tutors since the introduction of assistant principle tutors. Senior managers perceive there is an over use or inappropriate use of emergency senior cover by some staff. The classroom teacher interviewed felt there were issues relating to equity and equal

opportunities for students in 10 VOC. This was perceived to be especially the case concerning consistent application of whole school rules within the group.

The senior team felt that OfSTED had made a positive contribution to improvement in the school by providing positive feedback, “focusing the mind” and supporting the development of the RAP. However it was reported that the visit was conducted in a “*threatening*” (Headteacher), “*aloof*” “*rude and unsupportive*” (Senior manager) manner, although it was noted that the inspector’s manner did improve over the duration of the visit. The interviewees felt that their most recent OFSTED inspection was conducted within a more supportive framework. Suggestions for modifications to future monitoring visits included establishing and communicating a clear purpose for the visits to schools, using the same inspector over a period of time to support improvement and also to abolish the practice of lesson observations from the visits.

LEA support for this school was reported as poor. It was perceived that the LEA had a skills and knowledge shortage in the area of school improvement, particularly in challenging circumstances. In reality it was felt that the LEA was unable to deliver what the school needs most (‘a pool of good teachers’). It was accepted that LEA support was well intentioned but the quality of some advisors limited the potential impact of LEA interventions. It was felt that an area that the LEA could support in the future is the induction of newly qualified teachers.

It was perceived that the additional resources have made a positive contribution to school improvement. However, it was questioned whether the sum of £70,000 (1.5% of the total school budget) was enough to make a significant difference or whether it was worth the pressure or stress caused by a HMI monitoring visit conducted such a negative manner. Middle managers reported that they would benefit from some support or suggestions on how to spend the money effectively to improve departments.

7.3.5 Vignette D

School D is located in a city on the south coast of England. It is a mixed comprehensive school that has undergone a major expansion programme since 1997. By September 2002 it is planned that there will be 985 pupils on roll. The school is situated in the middle of a large council estate composed of high density housing with the highest number of single parent families in the city. There are a number of issues within the local community including several incidences of drug related crime, attempted suicides, prostitution and paedophilia. The school is 600 yards from the county boundary and there are four other secondary schools within a one-mile radius. Therefore, market forces are particularly strong in the area as parents can opt to send their children to one of several other local schools or to schools in the neighbouring LEA.

The challenging circumstances the school faces are highlighted by the nature of the students in the school. 55% of pupils have been identified as having special

educational needs and 30% of pupils are registered for free school meals. The school has been recognised as improving by OfSTED and the LEA. In 2001 26% of pupils gained 5 or more A*-Cs at GCSE and first choice applications were rising.

The school received £70,000 from the SfCC initiative. Resources deployed and purchased with this money included: the development of behaviour, attendance and progress policies through the implementation of attendance and behaviour monitoring 'colour' bands'; continuing professional development; LEA support for a weak department; key stage four curriculum development and recruitment and retention.

Teachers at all levels perceived that the resources provided by the initiative had supported the development of an "achievement culture" within the school. The initiative has provided the school with the extra resources necessary to implement some ideas which otherwise would not have been possible. The reported changes resulting from the strategies employed included reviewing pupils' attendance and behaviour every half term. For attendance pupils were placed in a colour band depending on their attendance (Gold- 100%; Green, 94-99%; Yellow, 93-88%; Blue, 87-80% and Red less than 80%). Pupils had a meeting and letters were posted to parents at the end of each session. The colour of the band in which students are placed triggers a set response thus, establishing consistency of practice. E.g. gold band pupils receive Letters,

certificates and pens each term and a drinks mug and free visit at the end of the year. At the end of year eleven pupils in the gold band receive a £50 voucher and watch. However, for pupils in the blue band a meeting with the EWO is initiated. Parents are invited to meet with the head of year, EWO and SMT. If the parents do not attend the meeting the EWO visits home and a formal caution is issued. The behaviour monitoring element is guided by the same principles of rewards for positive actions and sanctions for negative actions. Similarly, there are predetermined interventions for pupils at different levels of achievement. As the data are held on a database, individual pupils or class referrals and records can be scrutinised at any time.

This monitoring system has many advantages. At one level, the associated attendance and behaviour policies are living documents that form an integral part of school life. These have supported and maintained consistent staff behaviours and responses to situations within the school. At the pupil level the regular monitoring has enabled early identification of issues and an agreed formalised response to be initiated which is appropriate to the issue. One of the major successes reported by all staff was the rewarding and praise of pupils who previously went unnoticed within the school, forming what was described by one interviewee as the *“majority grey mass”* (Middle manager, school D). It was argued that the increased level of praise which many pupils were experiencing had developed individual’s self-confidence and esteem. The system has also

contributed to a shift in culture generated by peer pressure at pupil and parental level through the increased home contacts.

The professional development of staff is viewed as crucial to the evolution of the school. Newly qualified staff were inducted prior to their appointment. This training focuses on structures and policies within the school, also paying particular attention to sharing the expectations and ethos of the school with appointees. The senior management reported that professional development in the areas of multiple intelligence theory and learning styles had contributed to the raising the skill levels of some staff and engaged others to examine and reflect on the core practices of teaching and learning.

The LEA has provided a one-week block programme followed by fortnightly support visits for a weaker department. This intervention is considered to have been a success on two levels. First, in the classroom to support improved teaching and learning and second in supporting leadership and management of the department. The practical classroom support had resulted in classroom teacher's reporting they had become more willing to experiment, using ideas passed on from the advisor and generally more reflective as a result of the process. The advice given relating to coursework was deemed to be especially useful, while the management support has concentrated on the areas of subject leadership, using data to support pupil progress and developing schemes of work. New schemes and resources have been developed to support the subject

and some teachers' skills have been improved by the intervention. However, there remains a wide variation in the quality of teaching and learning within the department and leadership also continues to remain an important issue.

One retention point has been allocated to each core subject. This allowance is explicitly linked to development within each department. This has the effect of further distributing leadership within the organisation and providing middle managers with additional support to move the department forward. The post of assistant head has also been part funded through the initiative. The role of the assistant head has focused primarily on raising achievement across the school by improving pupil progress. This has included monitoring and analysis of data produced by the banding systems and involvement with the University of Keele 'Successful Schools Project'. Areas where there has been particular progress made include the key stage 2-3 transition and identification and targeting of C/D borderline pupils. Effective strategies such as revision sessions and the formalisation of coursework procedures have been introduced. This year an intensive revision programme has been timetabled rather than allowing pupils to go on 'study leave' prior to exams.

Staff at all levels reported that the HMI monitoring visit was a useful process. It was viewed as an audit that has validated the good work of the school. It was perceived that overall it had a positive effect on staff morale although it did create

additional pressure and workload. It was also felt that the purpose and agenda of the HMI monitoring visit was unclear.

The LEA has provided specific targeted support at departmental level. It is perceived that this support has resulted in changes of classroom practice. Another area of considerable success is the support for changes in schemes of work and coursework procedures in key stage 4. Teachers at all levels reported that they met with LEA advisors at least termly and that they could contact them via the telephone if necessary. Suggestions for improvements that the LEA could make to their service included providing more regular LEA observations and feedback to teachers; playing a greater role in NQT induction and support; and providing a focus and stimulation for more joined up thinking between external agencies.

All levels reported that that the additional funding was very important and that it had resulted in tangible changes that had contributed to improving the arrangements to support school improvement within the school. A number of areas for further improvement were identified. First, the longevity of the initiative was perceived to be an issue. Senior managers felt that it was hard to plan strategically when it is unclear how long the funding will last for. Second, the tone of the initial contact and subsequent meetings and correspondence was felt to be condescending and embodied in the language of failure. Therefore, it was felt that in the future meetings and discussions must create conditions conducive to

developing professional relationships and dialogue between all stakeholders. Third, it was argued that in order to improve teacher retention statistics there must be a concerted effort and focus on young teachers' development. Finally, the senior team were unhappy with the idea of twinning SfCC with Beacon or 'high achieving' schools. It was suggested that a more profitable way forward would be to twin schools with similar socio-economic profiles irrespective of improvement trajectories.

7.3.6 Vignette E

School E is a mixed comprehensive school with 420 pupils on roll. It is situated in a rural Southern county in England. The school serves a community with high levels of socio-economic deprivation and low levels of parental education although this is not reflected in the percentage of pupils registered for free school meals. Pupil turnover is high. One third of pupils are from military families that are relocated in small groups as 'trickle postings'. This hinders the tracking of pupils and limits the effectiveness of target setting due to missing data on entry. 28% of pupils are registered on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register and 3% of pupils have a statement of SEN.

The headteacher has been in post for ten years and is driven by a strong sense of moral purpose and commitment to the community ethos of the school. A senior team including a business manager and a young dynamic deputy supports him in his work. The middle management within the school is experienced and very

stable. Staff turnover is estimated at 10% and the school is finding it increasingly difficult to recruit teachers.

The school has received £70,000 from the SfCC initiative. The funds have been allocated to the development of ICT facilities including the development of a fibre optic network; the purchase of over 65 computers and associated software with broadband internet connection and the funding for an ICT technician post. The remainder of the funds have been used for accreditation at key stage 4, the development of key stage 4 GNVQ courses and to the professional development of staff. The School Improvement Plan also acts as the RAP.

Initially, the school attempted to create a 'learning zone' for weaker and disaffected pupils in key stages 3 and 4. Unfortunately the member of staff who developed the idea and was to run the centre moved to another post. No suitable member of staff could be identified within the school and despite efforts to recruit a new member of staff an appropriate person could not be appointed. Therefore the 'learning zone' is currently unused except for five hours per week when the ICT technician works with a small group of pupils in the room. This technician is in the process of registering as a graduate trainee providing the opportunity to redevelop this element of the initiative in the future.

The successes of the intervention were reported as improved curriculum development and continuing professional development. The effects of the curriculum development can be broadly split into the two areas of improved ICT facilities and key stage 4 course provision. It was perceived that the improved ICT facilities have contributed to improved teaching of ICT within subject areas and strengthened cross-curricular links. The system was fast and reliable so less time was spent problem solving. In ICT the pace, content and structure of lessons have improved considerably. The wider net was to be linked to subject areas to support non-specialists to incorporate ICT more effectively into their teaching repertoire. These facilities are providing pupils with the media and opportunity to access areas of the curriculum that previously they have found difficult. Interviewees perceived that there had been an increase in pupil motivation and self-esteem as a result of greater exposure to ICT equipment. In September 1995 there was no accreditation for ICT at key stage four. By September 1999 a GCSE course for all had been introduced. As a result of the SfCC initiative in September 2001 GNVQ ICT was implemented for year 10 and part 1 GNVQ ICT for year 11. A regular subject specialist had also been appointed and was teaching the majority of pupils in ICT. Individual short-term targets and regular homework had also been introduced. The school has purchased "Project 40" from Thomas Telford School to support the implementation of GNVQ ICT. Further resources had been invested in the modification of the scheme to provide more structured differentiation and

guidelines to match the scheme to pupil needs. In September 2002 the school planned to introduce GNVQ Science and GCSE Applied Science at key stage 4.

The second success of the initiative was reported as the increased provision of continuing professional development. Alistair Smith led a whole staff training day with a Beacon partner school focusing on accelerated learning. As a consequence of this the existing management have been encouraged to lead teaching and learning developments within the school. To date there has been a partial audit of preferred learning styles and some internal development and training in this area. All staff have taken part in OfSTED self-evaluation training on classroom observation and statements of good practice have been developed and established. However due to staffing issues, classroom observations had not been formalised were not occurring on a systematic regular basis.

The senior team reported that the HMI monitoring visit provided an external validation of the RAP but did not influence any changes in practice of those interviewed. It was reported that the visit generated much stress and anxiety during the build-up period and was conducted in a professional manner with a good understanding of context. Unfortunately it was felt that the visit had not made any difference to outcomes. LEA support for the school was reported as being historically weak. However, since the SfCC initiative it had improved. There was consultation and support for the generation of the RAP and there are now regular LEA visits to the school. The LEA still has difficulties in delivering

promises and the school perceives the LEA to have limited impact at the classroom level, although the school is very pleased with the key stage 3 numeracy and literacy support that it has received from the LEA consultant advisors.

The SfCC initiative has contributed to raising the profile of school attainment and improvement in this school. A position has now been reached where raising attainment and school improvement had been incorporated into the caring ethos of the school. Hence, it was perceived that the additional resources have made a positive contribution to school improvement. The significant successes were reported as the improved computer facilities and the impact that the initiative has had at the classroom level. However, it was felt that due to a prolonged period of under funding, the initiative could do little other than “tinker at the fringes” and that “£70,000 was not enough” (Headteacher, school E). Ideally, the school would like similar funding over a prolonged period of time thus informing and supporting longer term strategic planning for improvement.

7.3.7 Vignette F

School F is a 11-19 mixed comprehensive located in the West Midlands. It is situated in an area of high density, predominantly council-owned social housing. Although, the number of pupils registered for free schools has decreased during the past seven years the catchment area still exhibits high levels of socio-

economic deprivation. Over a quarter of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and a similar number speak English as a second language. Attainment on entry to the school is below national average for numeracy and literacy and over 14% of pupils in the school have been identified as having special educational needs.

The current headteacher was appointed seven years ago, being promoted from the position of deputy headteacher within the school. The headteacher has a strong sense of moral obligation to support the academic achievement of all pupils. This is coupled with a strong sense of pastoral responsibility and desire for improvement.

As the school is part of an Excellence in Cities cluster it has received a £20,000 school improvement grant from the SfCC initiative. Most of these funds have been allocated to the IQEA programme in the form of providing network generation and professional development time for teachers within the programme. However, elements of this funding have also contributed towards the purchase of an interactive whiteboard and the retention of a member of staff by part-funding of an internal promotion. The headteacher felt that the negative elements of the first meeting relating to the initiative hosted by the then DfES caused scepticism and a feelings of disempowerment amongst the headteachers present.

All interviewees perceived IQEA to be central to the school improvement efforts within the school. Interviewees perceived that initial involvement with the programme had supported the development of a dialogue centred on the improvement of teaching and learning. Interviewees argued this had led to professional discussion, reflection and the development of a common language of pedagogy. Twilight and residential courses underpinned by evidence from school improvement theory and practice have supported the improvement of teaching and learning in the school. Sessions focusing on the theoretical and practical strategies for developing teaching repertoire were reported as particularly significant in developing a risk-taking culture. This has challenged teachers, and given them the confidence to experiment with different methods in their classrooms. Theoretically grounded models of teaching including inductive teaching and collaborative group work have formed the basis of the continuing professional development of teachers at school F.

A key factor in the success of this programme is the establishment of a school improvement team or 'cadre group'. This group has been responsible for driving change within the school. The group is composed of staff from a range of subject areas, holding a range of formal positions within the school and also exhibiting a range of experience. This group has provided opportunities for staff at all levels of the organisation to take on additional leadership roles and engage in systematic enquiry to generate qualitative data within the organisation. A second

key factor in the success of the project in this school has been the high level of support from the Headteacher and the appointment of a senior manager responsible for IQEA and other interventions. This has given the IQEA programme a high profile and credibility amongst staff. In addition it has also facilitated a coherent approach to improvement within the school.

The opportunity for sharing good practice within and between schools has been an important feature of IQEA. Importantly, strong relationships had developed across schools that have supported enquiry-based professional learning networks. The perception is that IQEA has improved the quality of teaching and learning within this school and it had also supported the eradication of the poorest teaching, therefore, minimising the range in quality of teaching that pupils experience. Whilst ensuring, in the words of one classroom teacher *“the pupils get a more varied diet”* (classroom teacher, school F).

The senior team felt that unfortunately time pressure led the generation of the RAP to focus on the outcome of a document rather than on the process of generating it. If more time had been available senior managers claimed they would have enjoyed the opportunity to involve more staff at early stages. Interviewees perceived that the HMI monitoring visit was conducted in a good spirit and provided positive points for action. However, it failed to contribute to the development of the RAP. The senior team at the school perceived LEA support as limited but the headteacher met with an advisor on average once a term. In

order to improve their support the LEA need to speed up their response time to requests for help. It was perceived at all levels that throughout the intervention the University of Nottingham has provided high quality support for the IQEA programme. IQEA has had a profound effect on many of the staff at the school and has made major contributions to the morale, commitment and the re-skilling and up-skilling of some staff. However there is still a wide variation in individual teacher and departmental effectiveness within the school. Future challenges for the IQEA programme included:

- gaining the involvement, commitment and enthusiasm of all staff within the school;
- impacting on the quality of subject leadership;
- maximising opportunities for sharing good practice with, and learning from other schools;
- attempting to further tailor the programme to the individual needs of the school. This school perceives that the more professional networks that the initiative can generate, the greater the capacity for improvement within SfCCs.

School F has made significant progress in developing the arrangements for school and classroom improvement through the IQEA approach to school improvement.

7.3.8 Importance of context and the challenge of improvement

The six vignettes presented in this section highlight four important issues pertinent to the improvement of SfCC:

- the nature of context that these schools operate in is very diverse;
- there are a range of external barriers to improvement that SfCC can encounter;
- there is also a group of compounding internal factors which may also act as barriers to improvement;
- SfCC employ a range of strategies to overcome these barriers and secure improvement.

SfCCs can be found in many geographical situations. These include rural isolated locations, small county market town locations, within estates on the edge of new towns or in large conurbations and inner-city estates. The schools vary in size, age and type. Teaching staff within the school can be highly mobile causing the school a high staff turnover or very stable. Profiles also vary in terms of age, experience and gender. Student populations in SfCC also vary in their mobility, ethnic mix and socio-economic status. It would appear that far from being a homogeneous group, schools identified as facing challenging circumstances represent quite variable challenging contexts.

These vignettes also serve to identify a number of common barriers to improvement that may make SfCCs particularly difficult to improve. Some of these barriers appear to be related to the socio-economic and geographical context of the school (unemployment rates), while others appear operate independently of the school context (e.g weak external support from LEA). External barriers to improvement identified during phase two of this research include:

- long-term under resourcing of some schools;
- geographical isolation of rural schools;
- selective local educational systems;
- power of local educational market forces;
- weak external support from LEA;
- low community expectations irrespective of location;
- low community value of education;
- high levels of socio-economic deprivation;
- high levels of mobility in the local population;

It would appear that these barriers act as negative forces on improvement interventions and therefore make these schools particularly difficult to improve irrespective of the levels of intellectual and social capital within the school.

The data also suggests there are a number of common internal factors that contribute to the challenging nature of these schools. These may be historical in nature or continue to act as current barriers to improvement:

- historical pathology of weak leadership at senior level;
- historical financial mismanagement resulting in financial deficit;
- inconsistent application of policies and procedures that are in place;
- wide variation in the quality of middle management;
- wide variation in the quality of teaching and learning;
- fractured staff relationships and formation of cliques;
- high levels of staff and pupil turnover;
- low pupil attainment levels on entry to school;
- challenging pupil behaviour;
- poor physical environment.

These findings are not attempting to report a comprehensive list of internal and external barriers, or even suggesting that all schools exhibit all of the above characteristics. Rather, these data suggest any one SfCC may have in the past or continue to experience a number of these challenges in a particular mix that can contribute towards creating a unique and powerful blend of factors that may inhibit simplistic attempts at externally generated improvement. It would seem that if these schools are to achieve sustainable improvement then it is imperative to understand the wider context of improvement for these schools.

Most schools visited in phase two of the study used the additional resource provided by the initiative to implement a range of improvement strategies. These strategies can be grouped into four key areas identified in part one of this chapter:

- improving resources and fabric;
- improving structures and systems;
- recruitment and retention;
- continuing professional development.

Interviewees reported that where the strategies employed had been successful they had contributed to the improvement of teaching and learning by directly improving teacher behaviours, hence improving classroom practice. Indirectly, the increased use of data was used to inform target setting and monitoring of pupil progress. Strategies were employed to raise the self-esteem of students and resource was used to recruit and retain teachers.

7.4 Summary

This chapter has explored the SfCC Initiative as a form of external intervention. Informed by phase one of the research, more attention has been paid here to the context of the school and its relationship to intervention. The key theme emerging from this chapter relates to the power of school context. The thematic analysis

and vignettes highlight common themes at one level and diversity of context at another. In terms of common themes, the strategies for improvement can be grouped according to their nature and SfCC appear to experience a number of common barriers to improvement. However, the number and type of the barriers experienced by an individual school, combined with the individual school context appears to create a unique contextual blend of factors that can be powerful forces against school improvement. Therefore, the type and mix of strategies needed to improve any one SfCC in any given context is likely also to be unique. These findings suggest that more highly developed context specific approaches to improvement are needed to support the development SfCCs. Chapter eight, reports the findings from a survey of all teachers in six SfCC in one LEA. The purpose of this survey is two-fold. First to triangulate the data reported in the previous chapters and second to explore teachers' perceptions of external intervention in a broader sense.

Chapter eight

Phase 3 Teachers' perceptions of External Interventions including OfSTED and SfCCs Initiative: Findings

8.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings from a survey exploring teachers' perceptions of OfSTED inspection; the SfCC initiative and external interventions in SfCC. The primary aims of this survey (see appendix 5.10 for an example) were to collect data to triangulate against interview data (see chapters five and six) and to gain a deeper insight into the perceptions of teachers in SfCC about external interventions. The survey was distributed to all teachers (385) in all SfCC (total of six schools) in one LEA. A total of 94 responses were collected (see chapter four for further details of methods). This chapter is structured in seven sections. Following this introduction section two describes the properties of the sample. Section three reports the descriptive statistics relating to teachers' perceptions of OfSTED inspection. Section four reports teachers' perceptions of the SfCC initiative. Section five reports teachers' perceptions of external interventions per se. Section reports the cross-tabulation of results. In conclusion section seven summarises the key points made in this chapter.

8.2 Properties of the Sample

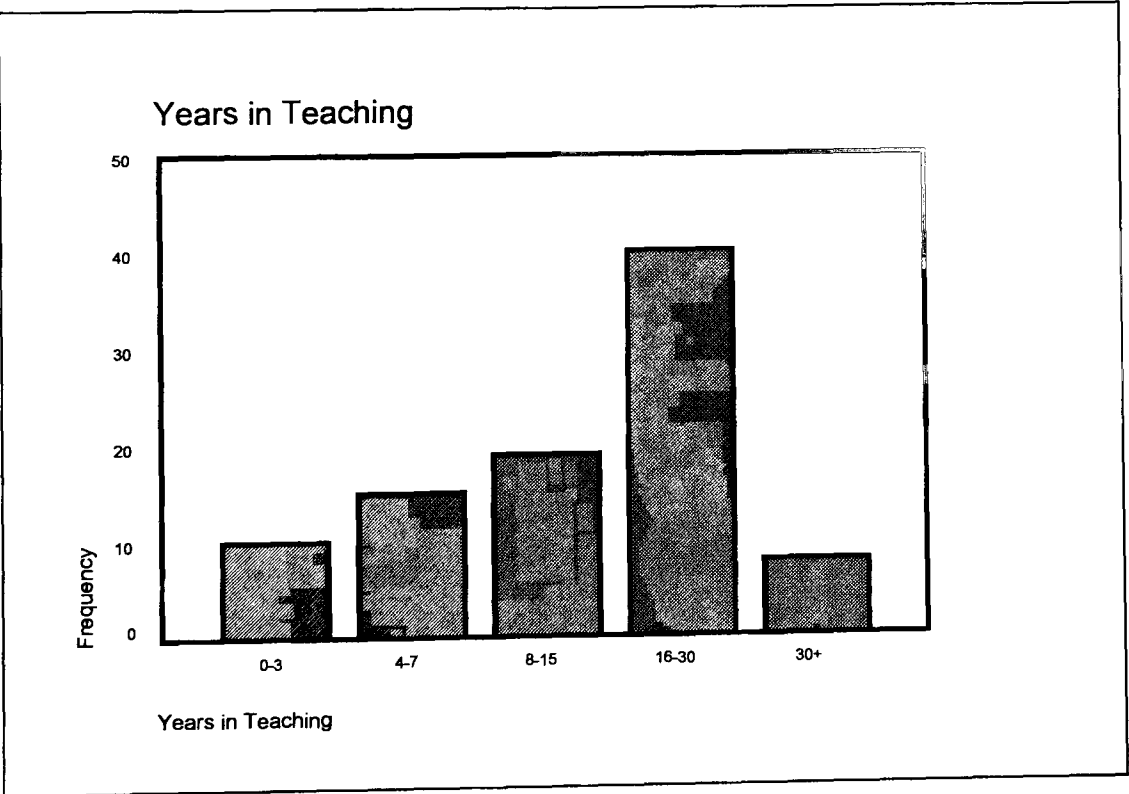
The total number of returned questionnaires was 94. These responses are broadly representative of the teachers working in SfCC. Of these 94 responses 53% were from female teachers and 47% male. 48% of the total responses were from teachers teaching core subjects ie. English, Mathematics and Science. The distribution of responses was fairly uniform across schools one, two five and six (n=13-17). However, there were substantially more responses from school three (n= 27) and fewer responses (n=5) from school four. School four was a small school experiencing a period of instability, including impending changes leadership this may have accounted for their particularly low response rate.

97% of respondents held permanent contracts. Table 8.1 shows the position respondents consider themselves to hold within their school. Responses from teachers considering themselves to be middle managers (39%) were most frequent, followed by classroom teachers (33%) and then senior management (19%). Newly qualified teachers accounted for 4% of responses and advanced skills teachers 2%. 2% of the data was missing due to respondents failing to respond to this question.

Table 8.1: Position held by respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Senior Management	18	19.1
	Middle Management	37	39.4
	Advanced Skills Teaher	2	2.1
	Classroom teacher	31	33.0
	Newly Qualified	4	4.3
Missing		2	2.1

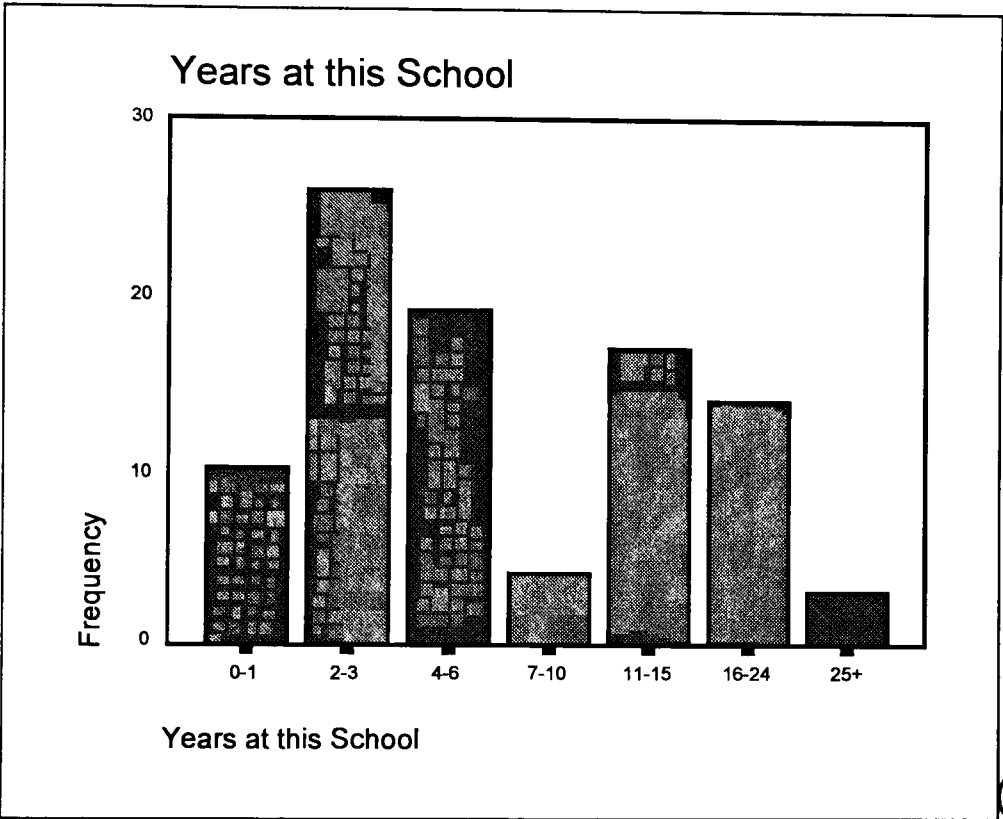
Graph 8.1 shows the number of years teaching experience held by respondents. Responses were skewed towards those from more experienced teachers. 67 responses (over 70%) were from teachers with eight or more years of teaching experience.



(n=92)

Graph 8.1: Graph showing distribution of respondents' teaching experience

However, as graph 8.2 illustrates 36 (38%) respondents had been at their current school for three or less years and only 4 (4.3%) between seven to ten years. This profile would be expected in SfCCs as they tend exhibit high levels of staff turnover. The bimodal could also be expected as long serving staff in SfCC may find it particularly difficult to gain promotion into another school.



(n=93)

Graph 8.2: Graph showing respondents years of service at current school

These results also suggest there are a large a number of experienced personnel working within SfCC. However, many of them may have only been in their current post for a short period of time.

Table 8.2 shows that 20 respondents (21%) reported they intend to apply for a new post within the next twelve months. However a further ten respondents failed to complete this question.

Table 8.2: Respondents likely to apply for a new post within the next twelve months

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	20	21.3
	No	64	68.1
Missing		10	10.6

Table 8.3 reports responses to the question asking if the respondent was to apply for a new post would it be to a similar type of school? 58 respondents (62%) reported they would apply for a post in a similar school. However, again there were 10 respondents who chose not to answer this question.

Table 8.3: Respondents likely to apply for a new post in a similar type of school if they were to apply for a new post

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	58	61.7
	No	26	27.7
Missing		10	10.6

8.2.1 Summary

The sample is relatively evenly distributed between male (47%) and female (53%) respondents and teachers from the core (48%) and non-core (52%) subjects. The distribution of responses from teachers at different schools is more varied. For schools one, two, five and six there were between 13-17 responses per school. In school four there were five responses and in school three 27 responses. Just over one fifth of respondents (21%) reported they were planning to apply for a new post within twelve months. However, due to missing data this could be as high as 31%. If respondents were to apply for a new post almost two-thirds (62%) reported that it would be to a similar type of school, although this could be as low as 51% due to missing data.

8.3 Teachers' views of OfSTED Inspection

Teachers responded to ten statements regarding OfSTED inspection. Their responses were gauged using a five-point likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). The results from this section of the survey are presented as frequency and percentage of distributions in tables 8.4 – 8.12:

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	11	11.8
Disagree	22	23.7
Neutral	17	18.3
Agree	37	39.8
Strongly agree	6	6.5
Total	93	100
Missing system	1	

Mean = 3.05

S.D= 1.172

Table 8.4: OfSTED inspection is an effective tool for school improvement

Table 8.4 reports just over half the respondents disagreed or held a neutral view relating to this statement. This suggests that teachers' views are divided as to whether OfSTED is an effective tool for school improvement.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	5	5.4
Disagree	13	14.0
Neutral	18	19.4
Agree	29	31.2
Strongly agree	28	30.1
Total	93	100
Missing system	1	

Mean = 3.67

S.D= 1.201

Table 8.5: Being labelled as requiring 'special measures' or 'serious weaknesses' is detrimental to the recovery of schools in these categories

Table 8.5 shows 61% of respondents perceived OfSTED's policy of labelling schools as requiring 'special measures' or 'serious weaknesses' was detrimental

to the recovery of these schools. Only 19% demonstrated disagreement with this statement. This suggests that teachers view the labelling of such schools as a barrier rather than facilitator of improvement.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	28	30.1
Disagree	33	35.5
Neutral	21	22.6
Agree	9	9.7
Strongly agree	2	2.2
Total	93	100
Missing system	1	

Mean = 2.18

S.D= 1.042

Table 8.6: The additional stress and workload created by an OfSTED inspection is justified by its contribution to school improvement

Table 8.6 reports 66% or two thirds of respondents thought that the additional stress and workload created by an OfSTED inspection is not justified by its contribution to school improvement. 12% of those surveyed considered the additional stress and workload to be justified. These results suggest that teachers consider the additional stress and workload incurred as a result of inspection do not to compensate potential gains in improvement.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	2	2.2
Neutral	27	29.0
Agree	35	37.6
Strongly agree	29	31.2
Total	93	100
Missing system	1	

Mean = 3.98 S.D= 0.834

Table 8.7: Inspection teams vary in quality, this can negatively influence inspection outcomes

Table 8.7 reports 69% of respondents believed that inspection teams varied in quality and that this could have a negative influence on inspection outcomes. 29% responded neutrally to this statement and 2% disagreed with it. Responses to this statement suggest that teachers perceive variations in inspection teams are hindering the quality of the process and and inspection outcomes.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	9	9.7
Disagree	24	25.8
Neutral	31	33.3
Agree	18	19.4
Strongly agree	11	11.8
Total	93	100
Missing system	1	

Mean = 2.98 S.D= 1.151

Table 8.8: Inspection pressure has negatively affected my professional work

Table 8.8 reports that approximately one third of respondents responded positively to this statement, another third neutrally and the final third negatively. This even division between the categories may suggest a high degree of ambivalence towards this statement. This is interesting given the strength of feeling against OfSTED. It may be that although teachers in SfCC have negative feelings towards the inspection process they can compartmentalise issues and do not allow inspection pressure to impact on their professionalism.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	14	15.1
Disagree	22	23.7
Neutral	26	28.0
Agree	27	29.0
Strongly agree	4	4.3
Total	93	100
Missing system	1	
Mean = 2.84		S.D= 1.135

Table 8.9: I have changed my teaching practice as a result of OfSTED inspections

Table 8.9 shows 33% or one third of teachers reported that they had changed their teaching practice as a result of OfSTED inspections. Less than one third (28%) of respondents responded neutrally to the statement. This may suggest that they were unsure as to whether they had or had not changed their practice as a result of inspection. 39% of respondents disagreed with the statement. The limited extent of changes reported as a result of inspection suggests that OfSTED only has a limited effect on teaching practice and therefore classroom

improvement. This is corroborated by the responses to the following statements presented in table 8.10 and 8.11.

	Frequency	Valid percent
Strongly disagree	14	14.9
Disagree	20	21.3
Neutral	31	33.0
Agree	25	26.6
Strongly agree	4	4.3
Total	94	100
Missing system	0	

Mean = 2.84 S.D= 1.110

Table 8.10: I have changed non-teaching aspects of my practice as a result of OfSTED inspections

Table 8.10 shows that just under one third (31%) of teachers surveyed reported they had changed their non-teaching practices as a result of OfSTED inspection. One third (33%) of respondents responded neutrally to this statement, again suggesting that they were unclear as whether they had changed their practice or that they misunderstood the statement. Just over one third (36%) of respondents disagreed with the statement. Again, this distribution of responses demonstrates limitations of the inspection process as a mechanism for change.

remaining 95% of responses were distributed between neutral responses (45%), responses that agreed with the statement (39%) and those that strongly agreed (5%). These results suggest that teachers are largely ambivalent or mildly positive towards changes that have been made in the inspection process.

8.3.1 Summary

The key findings from the section of the survey relating to teachers' perceptions and responses to OfSTED were:

- Teachers' views tend to be divided as to whether OfSTED inspection is an effective tool for school improvement.
- In general teachers view the labelling schools as '*special measures*' or '*serious weaknesses*' is a barrier rather than facilitator of improvement.
- Most teachers consider the additional stress and workload created by inspection is not justified by an inspection's contribution to improvement
- Many teachers perceive that leadership of staff by the leadership team can positively influence inspection outcomes
- Teachers identify variation in the quality of inspection teams and believe this variation can influence inspection outcomes.
- In general teachers report that OfSTED inspection has only limited effect on their non-teaching and teaching practices within schools.

- Teachers tend to consider feedback from inspectors as helpful and they perceive that changes to the inspection framework have had a positive effect on the inspection process.

8.4 Teachers' views of the SfCC Initiative

Teachers responded to nine statements regarding SfCC initiative inspection (appendix 5.10). Their responses were gauged using a five-point likert scale (1= strongly disagree/ 5= strongly agree). A tenth question was posed asking respondents to rank the impact of a series of external interventions (but only those interventions the school was involved with) in order of their contribution to school improvement (1= most impact/ 5 = least impact). Discussions with schools taking part in the survey identified staff mobility as a major factor contributing to the higher level of missing data in this section of the questionnaire. Results from this section of the survey are presented as frequency and percentage of distributions in tables 8.13 – 8.19:

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	15	17.2
Disagree	31	35.6
Neutral	37	42.5
Agree	4	4.6
Strongly agree	0	0
Total	87	100
Missing system	7	

Mean = 2.34

S.D= 0.819

Table 8.13: The school has not benefited by being part of the SfCC initiative

Table 8.13 reports that just over a half of respondents (53%) perceived their school had benefited from involvement with the SfCC initiative. 42% of responses were neutral and 5% of respondents perceived their school not to have benefited from the initiative.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	9	10.5
Disagree	31	35.6
Neutral	37	42.5
Agree	4	4.6
Strongly agree	0	0
Total	81	100
Missing system	13	

Mean = 2.80

S.D= 1.050

Table 8.14: I have not changed my teaching practice as a result of the SfCC initiative

Table 8.14 shows that 39% of teachers reported to have changed their teaching practice as a result of the SfCC initiative. Similar numbers responded neutrally to the statement and just under a quarter (22%) believed they had not changed their practice as a result of the initiative.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	15	17.4
Disagree	37	43.0
Neutral	30	34.9
Agree	4	4.7
Strongly agree	0	0
Total	86	100
Missing system	8	

Mean = 2.27
S.D= 0.80

Table 8.15: The initiative has not influenced the planning process within the school

Table 8.15 reports that 60% of respondents thought the initiative had influenced the planning process in their school. Conversely 5% of respondents thought the planning process had not been influenced by the initiative. This response suggests that the SfCC initiative has had a significant effect on the planning process in SfCCs. This could be attributed to focusing on raising attainment through the generation of a RAP.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	7	8.1
Disagree	28	32.6
Neutral	44	51.2
Agree	6	7.0
Strongly agree	1	1.2
Total	86	100
Missing system	8	

Mean = 2.60
S.D= 0.786

Table 8.16: The LEA has not provided effective support for this initiative

Table 8.16 reports 42% of respondents perceived the LEA to have provided effective support for the initiative. However, just over a half of respondents (51%) replied neutrally to this statement and 8% of respondents considered the LEA not to have provided effective support for the initiative.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	3	3.5
Disagree	8	9.3
Neutral	44	51.2
Agree	27	31.4
Strongly agree	4	4.7
Total	86	100
Missing system	8	

Mean = 3.24

S.D= 0.825

Table 8.17: SfCC monitoring visits have supported the improvement processes in this school

Table 8.17 reports that over one third of teachers (36%) believed the monitoring visits supported the improvement processes within their school. Approximately one half of respondents responded neutrally (51%) and 13% of teachers thought the visits had not supported improvement processes in their school.

Table 8.19 shows that the majority of respondents (62%) were ambivalent to this statement. 27% felt the school had benefited from involvement in external networks while 10% reported they had not benefited from external networks.

8.4.1 Summary

The key findings from the section of the survey relating to teachers' perceptions and responses to the SfCC initiative were:

- Approximately half the teachers that responded to the survey considered their school to have benefited from being part of the SfCC initiative.
- Over 60% of teachers considered the initiative to have influenced the planning process within the school.
- Just under one half of teachers perceived that the sharing of good practice within the school had improved as a result of involvement within the initiative.
- Just over a quarter of teachers perceived the school had benefited from involvement in external networks as a result of the SfCC initiative.

8.5 Teachers' views of external interventions

Teachers responded to eleven statements regarding generic issues relating to external intervention in SfCC. Their responses were gauged using a five-point likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree) to. The results from this section of the survey are presented as frequency and percentage of distributions in tables 8.20 – 8.28:

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	2	2.1
Disagree	15	16.0
Neutral	27	28.7
Agree	43	45.7
Strongly agree	7	7.4
Total	94	100
Missing system	0	

Mean = 3.40

S.D= 0.920

Table 8.20: Central government interventions have contributed to raising standards in schools

Table 8.20 reports that over half (53%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “central government interventions had contributed to raising standards in schools”. Just under one fifth (18%) of respondents showed disagreement with this statement. The fact that only just over a half of respondents viewed central government as contributing to raising standards in schools is concerning especially considering the levels of resource the current

government has invested within the educational system. Interestingly, table 8.20 below shows that one-third of respondents reported that the number of government interventions their school was involved with hindered their improvement efforts.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	7	7.4
Disagree	19	20.2
Neutral	37	39.4
Agree	20	21.3
Strongly agree	11	11.7
Total	94	100
Missing system	0	

Mean = 3.10

S.D= 1.088

Table 8.21: The number of government interventions that this school is involved in hinders our internal improvement efforts

Table 8.21 reports that one third (33%) of teachers thought that the number of government interventions they were involved with hindered their internal improvement efforts. Almost one third (28%) disagreed with this statement.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	2	2.1
Disagree	16	17.0
Neutral	35	37.2
Agree	36	38.3
Strongly agree	5	5.3
Total	94	100
Missing system	0	

Mean = 3.28 S.D= 0.885

Table 8.22: Government interventions have improved the quality of learning in this school

Table 8.22 reports that 44% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that government interventions had improved the quality of learning in their school. Just under one fifth of respondents showed disagreement with this statement. The responses to this statement are approximately similar (within 10%) to the views held regarding central government’s contribution to raising standards.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	3	3.4
Disagree	11	12.5
Neutral	23	26.1
Agree	30	34.1
Strongly agree	21	23.9
Total	88	100
Missing system	6	

Mean = 3.63 S.D= 1.086

Table 8.23: Some of the challenges faced by SfCC cannot be influenced by external interventions

Table 8.23 shows that approximately a quarter (24%) of respondents felt very strongly that some challenges faced by SfCC could not be influenced by external interventions. A further 34% of respondents agreed this to be the case. 16% of respondents felt that external interventions could overcome challenges faced by SfCC.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	4	4.3
Neutral	12	12.9
Agree	48	51.6
Strongly agree	29	31.2
Total	93	100
Missing system	1	

Mean = 4.10

S.D= 0.781

Table 8.24: Multiple interventions can often compete for time and resource in school

Table 8.24 reports that 83% of respondents thought that multiple interventions compete for time and resource in their school. 4% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

	Frequency	Valid percent
Strongly disagree	2	2.1
Disagree	11	11.7
Neutral	21	22.3
Agree	45	47.9
Strongly agree	15	16.0
Total	94	100

Mean = 3.64

S.D= 0.960

Table 8.25: External interventions can be counter productive and demotivate staff

Table 8.25 reports that just under two thirds (64%) of respondents perceived that external interventions could be counter productive and demotivate staff. 14% of respondents disagreed with this statement.

	Frequency	Valid percent
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	5	5.3
Neutral	32	34.0
Agree	42	44.7
Strongly agree	15	16
Total	94	100
Missing system	0	

Mean = 3.71

S.D= 0.798

Table 8.26: SfCC need differentiated strategies for improvement

Table 8.26 shows that over half (62%) of respondents perceived a need for differentiated strategies for school improvement in SfCC while 5% of respondents

disagreed. Only 5% of respondents disagreed with the statement. This suggests that teachers tend to understand the necessity for a differentiated approach to improvement.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	7	7.5
Neutral	41	44.1
Agree	35	37.6
Strongly agree	10	10.8
Total	93	100
Missing system	1	

Mean = 3.52

S.D= 0.789

Table 8.27: To be successful, external interventions must focus on a multi-agency approach

Table 8.27 reports that just under half (48%) of respondents perceived a focus on a multi agency approach to be linked to successful external interventions. The vast majority (44%) of the remaining responses were neutral. Again only very few teachers (7.5%) disagreed with the statement. This would suggest that not only do teachers recognise the need for differentiated approaches but they also value multi-agency approaches.

	Frequency	Valid percent
Strongly disagree	1	1.1
Disagree	17	18.1
Neutral	39	41.5
Agree	31	33.0
Strongly agree	6	6.4
Total	94	100

Mean = 3.26

S.D= 0.867

Table 8.28: External agencies lack the understanding of our context necessary to provide effective support for improvement

However, table 8.28 reports that over one third of respondents perceived external agencies to lack understanding the necessary understanding of their school context to provide effective support for improvement. About one fifth of respondents thought this not to be the case. Tables 8.24-8.26 would suggest that teachers understand the importance of differentiated school improvement and the benefits of a multi-agency approach however, only just under one-fifth of teachers viewed external agencies as having the necessary understanding of their context to provide effective support for improvement.

Respondents were also asked to rank a number of interventions (only those interventions the school was involved with) in order of their contribution to school improvement (1= most impact/ 5 = least impact). Table 8.27 presents these responses. Respondents were most positive about the Education Action Zones and National Literacy Strategy. Interestingly OfSTED inspection was viewed as having slightly more impact than the SfCC initiative. However, The SfCC initiative

had the highest standard deviation and thus the greatest spread in of responses. This may suggest that teachers’ view of the impact of SfCC initiative was determined by school-based factors such as how the school decided to invest the resource. Respondents were least positive about EiCs and the National Numeracy Strategy.

	N	Mean	S.D
National Numeracy Strategy	77	3.27	1.383
Excellence in cities	50	3.26	1.352
SfCC initiative	65	3.14	1.519
OfSTED inspection	78	2.86	1.402
National Literacy Strategy	84	2.49	1.156
Education Action Zones	55	2.47	1.425

Table: 8.29 Teachers views of the contribution of external interventions to school improvement in SfCC

8.5.1 Summary

The key findings from the section of the survey relating to teachers’ perceptions and responses to external interventions were:

- About half the teachers that responded to the survey considered that central government interventions had contributed to raising standards in schools. However about one-third of teachers felt that the number of government interventions hindered internal improvement efforts in their school;

- Almost a quarter of teachers felt very strongly that some challenges faced by SfCC could not be overcome by external intervention. In total over one half of respondents subscribed to this view.
- Over four fifths of teachers felt that multiple interventions could compete for time and resource in school;
- Almost two thirds of teachers felt external interventions can be counter productive and demotivate staff;
- The majority of teachers recognised the need for differentiated improvement strategies. However, over one third of respondents felt external agencies lacked the necessary understanding of context to provide effective support for improvement;
- Teachers perceive the National numeracy strategy, EiC and SfCC as the most effective interventions and EAZs and National literacy strategy as least effective;

8.6 Cross tabulation of results

8.6.1 Differences by Gender

There were significant differences ($P<0.05$) between Male and Female responses on the Mann-Whitney U test on the following questions:

	Gender Means	
	Female	Male
	N=50	N=44
Ofsted Inspection	2.48	3.26
SfCC initiative	3.56	2.73

Table 8.30: Table showing cross tabulation of gender and impact of external intervention

The OfSTED Inspection and SfCC initiative were rated from 1 = most impact to 5 = least impact. Female teachers perceived OfSTED inspection to have more impact than male teachers. For the SfCC initiative the converse was the case.

Statement	Gender Means	
	Female	Male
	N=50	N=44
The school has not benefited by being part of the SfCC initiative.	2.55	2.14
I have changed my teaching practice as a result of OfSTED inspections	2.62	3.09
I have changed non-teaching aspects of my practice as a result of OfSTED inspections	2.60	3.11

Table 8.31: Table showing significant differences between male and female responses

For the statements in table 8.31 the scale is 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. Females felt that the school has not benefited from the SfCC initiative more than males. Males reported to have changed their teaching and non-teaching practice as a result of OfSTED inspection more than females. These questions suggest males tend to have a more positive attitude to both SfCC and OfSTED.

8.6.2 Differences in response between core and non-core subject teachers

The Mann-Whitney U test was tested for differences between the two subject areas, core and non-core subjects. Only one statement was found to show significant differences ($P<0.05$).

Statement	Main Subject Area Means	
	Core	Non-core
	N=45	N=48
The school benefited from involvement in external networks as a result of SfCC	3.48	3.04

Table 8.32: Table showing significant differences in responses between teachers of core and non-core subjects

Table 8.32 shows significant differences in responses between core and non-core teachers. This was a positive question about SfCC and external networks. The core subject teachers tended to agree that the school had benefited from involvement in external networks as a result of the SfCC initiative more than non-

core teachers. This is particularly interesting. It may imply that core subjects benefited most from the resources provided by the initiative.

8.6.3 Differences by years of teaching experience

The teachers were divided into three groups of teaching experience: 0-7 years, 8-16 years and 16+ years. There were several questions that showed up significant differences ($p < 0.05$) for these three groups using the Kruskal-Wallis test (a non-parametric test for differences between more than two groups on an ordered variable).

Statement	Years of Experience Means		
	0-7years	8-16years	16+years
	N=25	N=19	N=48
The LEA provides effective support for government interventions	3.29	3.74	3.77
SfCC need differentiated strategies for improvement.	3.32	3.79	3.85
The school has not benefited by being part of the SfCC initiative.	2.70	2.32	2.16
The HMI monitoring visits were conducted in a supportive manner.	3.17	3.21	3.67
The initiative has not influenced the planning process within the school	2.65	2.44	1.98
The LEA has not provided effective support for this initiative	2.87	2.78	2.33
Preparation of staff for the inspection week by the school leadership team influenced inspection outcomes.	3.20	3.56	3.85
I have changed my teaching practice as a result of OfSTED inspections	2.68	2.42	3.09
Changes to the inspection framework have improved the inspection process	3.24	3.32	3.67

Table 8.33: Table showing significant differences in responses by teaching experience

Table 8.33 shows significant differences in responses between teachers with different levels of experience. These questions are all on a five point scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The more experienced teachers tended to be more positive about the nature of LEA support for government interventions including the SfCC initiative. Likewise more experienced teachers also recognised the need for differentiated improvement strategies more than their less experienced colleagues. The more experienced teachers tended to perceive

the school had benefited from being part of the SfCC initiative more than their less experienced counterparts. The more experienced teachers also thought the HMI monitoring visits were conducted in a more supportive manner than their less experienced colleagues. They also thought the initiative had influenced the planning process within the school more than their less experienced colleagues. The more experienced teachers tended to think that leadership of staff could influence inspection outcomes and that changes to the inspection framework had improved the inspection process. More experienced staff reported they were also more likely to change their teaching practice as a result of inspection. In summary the more experienced staff tended to be more positive in their responses to the statements.

8.6.4 Differences between manager-teachers and classroom teachers

The question on “your position in school” was divided into two groups - managerial and class teacher. A Mann-Whitney U test for ordered questions was carried out for significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between the two groups. The following questions were found to have significant differences.

	Position in School		
	Senior Management	Middle Management	Classroom Teachers
	N=18	N=37	N=37
The LEA provides effective support for government interventions	3.94	3.76	3.33
Some of the challenges faced by SFCC cannot be influenced by external interventions	4.24	3.42	3.50
The school has not benefited by being part of the SfCC initiative	1.80	2.31	2.57
The initiative has not influenced the planning process within the school	1.50	2.31	2.49
Preparation of staff for the inspection week by the school leadership team influenced inspection outcomes.	4.24	3.61	3.30
Changes to the inspection framework have improved the inspection process	3.89	3.51	3.22

Table 8.34: Table showing significant differences in responses between teachers with management responsibility and classroom teachers

Table 8.34 reports significant differences in responses between teachers with management responsibility and classroom teachers. Senior managers were most positive about the LEA’s support for government interventions. Although still positive about LEA support, classroom teachers were more negative than middle and senior managers. All groups agreed that there are some challenges faced by SfCC that cannot be influenced by external interventions. However, senior managers and classroom teachers tended to agreed the most and middle managers the least with this statement. The remaining questions in table 8.33 that highlight significant differences between managers and non-managers follow the same trend as those reported in table 8.32 which reports differences between

teachers' responses according to experience. This is unsurprising as more experienced teachers tend to hold more senior management positions. Teachers holding higher level management positions tended to think that the school had benefited from the SfCC initiative more than their colleagues in middle management positions. Those holding middle management positions responded more positively than their colleagues with no management position. This was also the case for statements regarding the SfCC initiative's influence on the school's planning process, the preparation of staff by leadership affecting the outcome of inspection and in perceiving changes in the inspection framework has improved the inspection process. In summary, teachers holding more senior management positions tend to hold more positive perceptions of external interventions except in relation to external interventions overcoming some of the challenges faced by SfCC. In this case middle managers tend to feel that interventions can overcome these challenges more than classroom teachers and senior managers.

8.6.5 Differences between those who have remained in the same school longest.

The teachers were divided into two groups - those that had worked in their present school 0-6 years and those that had worked 7+ years. Again a Mann-Whitney U test was applied to identify significant differences ($p > 0.05$) between the two groups. The following questions were found to have differences.

	Years in Same School Means	
	0-6years	7+years
	N=55	N=38
The number of government interventions that this school is involved in hinders our internal improvement efforts.	2.78	3.53
The SfCC initiative has not influenced the planning process within the school	2.45	2.00
Inspection pressure has negatively affected my professional work	2.76	3.32

Table 8.35: Table showing differences between responses from teachers that have taught at the same school for 0-6 years or more than 7 years

Table 8.35 reports the differences in responses from teachers that have taught at the same school for 0-6 years or more than 7 years. Teachers with over seven years experience in the same school viewed the number of government interventions as a hindrance to internal improvement efforts more than teachers that have been in the same school for less time. Teachers that have taught at the same school for more than seven years thought SfCC initiative had influenced the planning process within the school more than teachers that had been at the school for less time. Teachers who had been at the same school for seven or more years thought that inspection pressure had negatively affected their professional work significantly more than those who had been at the same school for less time. In summary teachers with seven or more years experience tend to be more negative about external intervention than their colleagues with less service at that school. However, they do recognise that the SfCC initiative has

influenced the planning process more than their colleagues with less experience of that school.

8.6.6 Differences between those who would apply for a post in a similar type of school or not

Again a Mann-Whitney U test was carried out between those who would or would not apply for a post in a similar type of school.

	Similar Type of School Means	
	Yes	No
	N=58	N=26
Multiple interventions can often compete for time and resource in school	3.93	4.40
External interventions can be counter productive and demotivate staff	3.43	3.96
I found the SfCC HMI visits a threatening experience	2.46	3.13
OfSTED inspection is an effective tool for school improvement	3.35	2.62

Table 8.36: Table showing significant differences in responses between teachers who would apply for a post in a similar type of school or not

Table 8.36 reports significant differences in responses between teachers that would apply for a post in a similar type of school or not. Those teachers that reported they would apply for a post in a similar type of school considered

multiple interventions to compete for time and resource in a school less than their colleagues who reported they would not apply to similar type of school. Those that would apply for a post at a similar type of school also tended to view external interventions as less counter-productive or de-motivating than their colleagues. In addition they found the SfCC HMI monitoring visits less threatening and viewed OfSTED inspection more positively than those colleagues who would not apply for a post in a similar type of school. In summary, those teachers willing to apply for a post at a similar type of school tended to be more positive about external interventions.

8.6.7 Differences between those teachers who intended to apply for a new post in the next twelve months and those who did not.

Again a Mann-Whitney U test was carried out between the two groups for significant differences ($p<0.05$). The following questions were found to have differences for the two groups.

	New Post in Twelve Months Means	
	Yes	No
	N=20	N=64
Central government interventions have contributed to raising standards in schools	2.90	3.58
To be successful, external interventions must focus on a multi-agency approach	3.30	3.60
External agencies lack the understanding of our school context necessary to provide effective support for improvement	3.65	3.06
The school has not benefited by being part of the SfCC initiative	2.83	2.25
The sharing of good practice in my school has increased as a result of being part of the SfCC initiative.	2.94	3.51

Table 8.36: Table showing significant differences in responses between those teachers who intended to apply for a new post in the next twelve months and those who did not.

Table 8.37 shows significant differences in responses between those who intended to apply for a new post in the next twelve months and those who did

not. Teachers that intended to apply for a new post within twelve months viewed government intervention's role in school improvement more negatively than those intending not to apply for a new post. They also tended to view external agencies as lacking the necessary understanding of their school context needed to provide effective support for improvement compared to those teachers not intending to apply for a new post. Those teachers intending not to apply for a new post perceived that interventions must focus on a multi agency approach to be successful. They also tended to report the school had benefited from the SfCC initiative and that the sharing of good practice had increased as a result of being part of the SfCC initiative more than colleagues who intended to apply for a new post. In summary, those teachers intending to apply for a new post within twelve months were more negative about external interventions. Similarly, those that intended not to apply for a new post held a more positive attitude to the SfCC initiative.

8.6.8 Differences Between Schools

The Kruskal-Wallis Test (non-parametric test for more than two groups) was carried out for differences between schools. Significant differences ($p<0.05$) were found on the following statements:

	Schools Means					
	School i	School ii	School iii	School iv	School v	School vi
	N=16	N=17	N=27	N=5	N=13	N=16
OfSTED inspection is an effective tool for school improvement	2.47	2.59	3.15	3.40	3.46	3.50
Inspection pressure has negatively affected my professional work	3.47	3.53	2.96	2.40	2.54	2.50
I have changed my teaching practice as a result of OfSTED inspections	2.37	3.25	3.00	4.20	2.00	2.88
Feedback received from inspectors has informed my practice	3.31	3.18	3.26	3.80	2.23	3.75
Changes to the inspection framework have improved the inspection process	3.50	3.12	3.37	4.20	3.31	3.88

Table 8.38: Table showing significant differences between school responses in relation to OfSTED Inspection

Table 8.38 reports the differences between school responses in relation to OfSTED inspection. Teachers in schools v and vi agreed most that OfSTED inspection is an effective tool for school improvement while teachers in schools i and ii disagreed most. Teachers in schools vi and iv reported that inspection

pressure had least negative impact on their professional work. Teachers in schools i and ii reported inspection pressure had had the most negative impact on their professional work. Teachers in schools vi and iv reported they had changed their teaching practice as a result of inspection most and teachers from schools i and v reported they had changed their practice as a result of inspection least. Similarly, teachers from the same schools agreed (schools ii and iv) and disagreed (schools v and v) the most in relation to the feedback from inspectors informing their practice. Teachers from schools iv and vi agreed the most that changes to the inspection framework have improved the inspection process, while teachers from schools ii and v agreed the least, although all were fairly in agreement. In summary, teachers in schools i and ii had the most negative attitude towards OfSTED inspections and teachers in schools iv and vi held the most positive attitudes. The positive responses from school vi may be accounted for by the significant levels of change the school has experienced in recent years. This culminated with the school being removed from special measures in 2001.

	Schools Means					
	School I	School ii	School iii	School iv	School v	School vi
	N=16	N=17	N=27	N=5	N=13	N=16
The school has not benefited by being part of the SfCC initiative.	1.81	2.35	2.41	2.80	3.00	2.38
I have not changed my teaching practice as a result of the SfCC initiative	2.13	3.25	2.74	2.80	3.83	2.75
The HMI monitoring visits were conducted in a supportive manner.	3.07	3.47	3.44	3.00	3.17	4.06
The initiative has not influenced the planning process within the school	1.53	2.59	2.48	2.00	2.67	2.19
The sharing of good practice in my school has increased as a result of being part of the SfCC initiative.	4.06	3.35	3.48	3.20	2.80	3.06

Table 8.39: Table showing significant differences in responses between schools in relation to the SfCC initiative

Table 8.39 shows differences between teachers’ perceptions and responses to the SfCC initiative from different schools. Teachers from all schools tended to agree that their school had benefited from the SfCC initiative but teachers from school i and iii agreed the most and teachers from iv and v the least. Teachers in schools i and iii reported they had changed their practice the most as a result of the initiative, while teachers in schools ii and vi reported they had changed their practice least. Teachers in schools i and iv disagreed most that the HMI monitoring visits had been conducted in a supportive manner, while teachers in

schools ii and vi tended to agree the most. Teachers in schools i and iv perceived the initiative to influence planning within their school most, while teachers in schools ii and vi still agree, but to a lesser extent. Teachers in schools i and iii reported the sharing of good practice as a result of being part of the initiative had increased most in their schools. Although teachers in schools v and vi reported the sharing of good practice had also increased as a result of the initiative, they agreed to a lesser extent. In summary, teachers in school i were most positive towards the initiative and teachers in schools v and vi least positive. It is important to note that school i was involved with an IQEA programme as part of the SfCC initiative (the same programme as school F in chapter seven).

	Schools Means					
	School I	School ii	School iii	School iv	School v	School vi
	N=16	N=17	N=27	N=5	N=13	N=16
The number of government interventions that this school is involved in hinders our internal improvement efforts.	3.12	3.65	2.63	3.80	3.08	3.06
External agencies lack the understanding of our school context necessary to provide effective support for improvement	3.06	3.53	3.11	2.60	3.77	3.19

Table 8.40: Table showing significant differences in responses between schools in relation to the external intervention in SFCC

Table 8.40 reports the differences between teachers’ perceptions of external interventions from different schools. Although teachers in all schools tend to agree that the number of government interventions their school is involved in hinders their internal improvement efforts teachers from schools ii and iv show most agreement and those from schools iii and vi the least. However, teachers from schools i and iv agree most that external agencies lack the understanding necessary to provide effective support for improvement and teachers in schools i and v show least agreement. Appendix 8.1 provides an insight into the school characteristics in 2001. However, more recent work with these schools would suggest that schools i and iv have the highest capacity for change and the most positive cultures (Chapman, 2003).

	<i>Schools Means</i>					
	School i	School ii	School iii	School iv	School v	School vi
	N=16	N=17	N=27	N=5	N=13	N=16
Education Action Zones	2.00	1.81	2.27	2.25	3.00	4.38
SfCC initiative	1.54	3.00	3.72	2.00	4.13	3.57

Table 8.41: Table showing significant differences between schools in relation to the impact of interventions

Table 8.41 shows significant differences in how schools rated the impact (1 = most impact to 5 = least impact) of the SfCC initiative and EAZs. Teachers in school ii rated EAZs as having the highest impact and teachers in school vi the lowest. The SfCC initiative was rated to have the most impact by teachers in

school i and the lowest by teachers in school v. Again this may reflect that school i was involved with an IQEA programme as part of the initiative while school v received £20,000 rather than £70,000 because they were already in an EAZ.

8.6.9 Summary of cross tabulation of results

The key findings from cross tabulation of results are:

- Gender can play a role in determining teachers' perceptions of external interventions;
- Teachers' of core subjects perceive that they had benefited from networking activity more than those who taught non-core subjects;
- More experienced teachers' were more positive about external interventions than their less experienced colleagues;
- Teachers that reported they would apply for a post in a similar type of school held more positive perceptions of external interventions compared to their colleagues that reported they would not;
- Those teachers that were intending to apply for a new post within twelve months tended to be more negative about external interventions;
- Teachers that had taught in the same SfCC for seven or more years held more critical perceptions of OfSTED in relation to their professional work and were in general more negative about external interventions;
- Teachers in school 1 were most negative about OfSTED and most positive about SfCC initiative and teachers in school 6 were most positive about OfSTED inspections and least positive about the SfCC initiative;

- Teacher profile and school context are important factors in determining teachers' perceptions of external interventions;

8.7 Summary

This chapter has reported the findings of a survey investigating teachers' perceptions and responses to external intervention. The results presented here provide a triangulation of evidence supporting the findings from phases one and two of this research. In general teachers' tended to perceive OfSTED inspection as a negative intervention and the SfCC as a more positive external intervention. More teachers reported they changed their practice as a result of the SfCC initiative (46%) rather than OfSTED inspection (33%). The findings from this survey also suggest some teachers perceive external interventions to have contributed to improving the quality of learning and to raising standards and that teachers from core-subjects particularly value networking as a mechanism for improvement. However, there is also an acceptance that some challenges cannot be overcome by external intervention and interventions can be counter productive and de-motivate staff. Teachers also recognised the need for differentiated improvement strategies in SfCC but 40% of teachers felt that external agencies lacked the necessary understanding of their school context to support improvement.

It would seem that individual teacher profiles in terms of age, experience and gender play a role in the way that teachers' perceive external intervention but

teachers in all schools considered the number of interventions they were involved with hindered their internal efforts and that external agencies lack understanding of their school context to provide effective support for school improvement. However, there remained significant differences between schools, suggesting that school context is an important factor in determining how teachers' perceive external interventions. For example teachers in schools i and ii held the most negative perceptions of OfSTED inspection but were positive about the SfCC initiative and teachers in schools iv and vi were most positive regarding OfSTED inspection and those in schools v and vi least positive about the SfCC initiative. It is likely that these differences are accounted for by variations in individual school cultures, capacity for change, growth states and improvement trajectories. Therefore, if external interventions are to succeed in these diverse contexts it is imperative they are sensitive to the individual school context.

While the sample is broadly representative, the small number of responses from teachers in school iv may have exaggerated some of the differences between the schools and therefore skewed the findings. However, the consistency of the data collected throughout this research that indicates school context as an important factor in determining how teachers respond to external intervention suggests that even if there were a larger number of responses from school iv the results would remain unchanged.

In conclusion, the findings from the survey reported in this chapter reinforce those presented in chapters six and seven that highlight the limitations of OfSTED as a mechanism for school improvement. In addition, the findings of this survey also support those relating to the power of context and therefore substantiate the argument for developing more sophisticated approaches to school improvement drawing on differentiated strategies according to school context. The following chapter will discuss the findings from this research within the wider context of external interventions and school improvement. Drawing on key themes from this research chapter nine argues for a more differentiated approach to improvement for all schools in challenging circumstances. In conclusion to this thesis chapter nine proposes a heuristic model that matches strategies for improvement to different types of SfCCs.

Chapter nine

9 Discussion

9.1 Introduction

This thesis has focused on the relationship between external interventions and school improvement. Two examples of external intervention have been explored in depth (OfSTED inspection and the SfCC Initiative). The overarching research questions considered in this thesis are:

- *How do teachers working in schools facing challenging circumstances perceive external interventions?*
- *What forms of external intervention are most likely to generate school improvement in schools facing challenging circumstances?*

To address these questions this research has drawn on data collected from interviews with over 150 teachers in 20 schools and questionnaire data from a further 94 teachers from another 6 schools. In conclusion to the thesis this chapter argues for a more sophisticated approach to school improvement in SfCCs. Following this introduction the second section discusses six key themes that permeate through each phase of the research. The third section draws on the themes to outline challenges and principles associated with successful external intervention. The fourth section presents a heuristic model that aims to develop thinking into how we can conceptualise differentiated intervention for improvement for in SfCC. The fifth, and final section of this chapter and the thesis

concludes by arguing that if external intervention is to play a significant role in improving schools the rhetoric of context specific school improvement must be transformed into the reality of practice.

9.2 External Intervention and School Improvement: Key themes

This research collected data from SfCCs during the period 2001-2003. It focused on accountability and resource focused interventions as mechanisms for improvement. While it is problematic to generalise these findings across all interventions on a statistical basis it is possible to make some broad extrapolations from these examples of intervention to other interventions that rely on similar principles. In the case of the SfCC initiative despite a input of significant resources there is little evidence to suggest that teachers recognise these interventions as making a significant contribution to school improvement in SfCC. Teachers' perceptions of OfSTEDs contribution to improvement are largely ambivalent or negative and while additional resources from the SfCC initiative have been welcomed by schools there appears wide variation in the perception of their impact on school improvement, which is supported by the variation in improved outcomes. In summary, the findings suggest while some external interventions are proving to be more acceptable to teachers, for the most part they continue to fail to improve many SfCCs. There is little evidence to suggest external interventions have made a significant difference to examination results. The group of schools deemed to be facing challenging circumstances remains at a similar level of performance and other proxy indicators including the percentage

of SfCC returning to special measures remains high (Gray, 2000). In total, 160 schools were placed into special measures in 2002/3 compared to 129 in the previous school year. Over the year 43 schools within the serious weaknesses category had not improved sufficiently by the time they were re-inspected and therefore were placed in special measures (OfSTED, 2004b). This research has not dealt with technology-based interventions. However, their impact also remains questionable. For example an independent evaluation of the National Literacy Strategy reported limited impact despite encouraging signs from early gains in student outcomes. (Earl *et al.*, 2003).

There are seven key themes that have emerged from the findings. These are:

- labelling and categorisation of schools;
- the power of context;
- relationships with external agencies;
- role of leadership;
- importance of networks;
- school capacity for change

9.2.1 Labelling and categorisation of schools

The findings suggest that government and local authority policy of labelling and categorising different types of schools is an unhelpful strategy. The labels and categories commonly reported are divisive and include: '*special measures*',

'serious weaknesses', 'at risk', 'under-performing', 'challenging circumstances', 'extremely challenging circumstances' and 'fresh start'. Most of the labels used have connotations of failure and therefore it is unsurprising that teachers view them negatively. However, findings from this research suggests that even those labels (e.g SfCC) that could be construed as more positive than others are still perceived very negatively by teachers.

The consequences of being labelled as failing can be demotivating and in some cases catastrophic having far reaching effects in all areas of school and community life. Consequently, the policy of *'naming and shaming'* has important implications for recruitment and retention of staff and pupils. Recruitment would seem a problematic issue for many schools serving challenging circumstances because of the additional levels of commitment and motivation needed to achieve what would be taken for granted in less challenging circumstances (Mortimore and Whitty, 1997). For SfCC identified as failing, to attract good experienced teachers to work in a climate where excessive levels of pressure and accountability pervade school life is likely to be an even more demanding task. However, to attract such teachers to work in such schools in such conditions and to be publicly labelled as failing is likely to be almost impossible. Furthermore, despite all of the negative conditions associated with these schools if teachers can be recruited, to retain them remains a central issue. The on-going pressure created by these labels can lead to teachers 'burning out' very quickly (Stoll and Myers, 1998). This phenomenon may also apply to school leaders. In a recent

survey of Headteachers Earley and Collerbone (2002) found that most headteachers wanted to move to a school in less challenging circumstances.

Second, the labels associated with school 'failure' and more recently SfCC have formed the basis for many negative media sound-bites and newspaper headlines (e.g Clark, 1998). They have provided an over-simplistic representation of school performance allowing negative reporting in the media which further compounds issues and confidence within a school and between stakeholders in the local context.

9.2.2 The power of context

This thesis highlights that SfCCs are contextually more diverse than their single label suggests. Therefore '*top down*' interventions targeted at the whole group of schools in this category are unlikely to yield significant improvements across the group because they fail to address contextual differences. The complexity of challenging contexts is located in a myriad of socio-economic problems. Gore & Smith (2001) identify particular contextual factors including high levels of unemployment, physical and mental health issues, migration of the best qualified young people and, not least, low educational achievement as important contextual factors. In addition SfCCs are recipients of higher than average numbers of pupils with diverse ethnic backgrounds and low literacy levels on entry (DfES,2000). In many cases, SfCC take a high proportion of refugee children or pupils that have been excluded from other schools. Not only does this

make the student population inherently transient but it presents teachers with the daily task of teaching pupils who they have not taught before. Inevitably this places great demands on teachers and often leaves the school in a position of having difficulty with teacher recruitment and retention. In combination, these factors make the prospect of curriculum coverage and effective teaching and learning more difficult to achieve.

In many cases SfCCs experience low community expectations and a mistrust of what can be achieved through the formal process of schooling. Other common features include weak leadership at senior levels and the absence of adequate structures or policies to support improvement efforts. Inconsistent application of policies and procedures also characterise a number of SfCCs. Similarly, significant variation in the quality of middle management and in the quality of teaching and learning exacerbate problems further and have been shown to be significant contributory factors to low levels of student achievement and performance (Harris *et al.*, 2003).

In addition, this thesis highlights a number of common external compounding factors that make the extent of the challenge facing these schools much worse. These challenges include the geographical isolation of rural schools, selective local educational systems, weak support from LEA, low levels of formal qualifications in local adult population and poor employment opportunities make the prospect of long term sustained improvement desirable rather than

achievable. This is not to suggest that these schools cannot improve but simply to acknowledge that the task facing them is significantly harder and more daunting than schools in more favourable circumstances.

Although these schools share certain socio-economic characteristics and face similar challenges this is where the similarity ends. Unlike 'effective' or 'improving' schools in less challenging circumstances which research shows consistently share the same characteristics, the inherent complexity of SfCCs means that they do not readily demonstrate the same internal conditions or features. Recent research has shown that schools at the bottom of the league tables of performance are culturally very different, despite sharing similar sets of characteristics or facing similar sets of external challenges (Harris, *et al.*, 2003).

As Hargreaves (2004) has recently argued:

underperforming schools are not all alike, the reasons for or nature of their underperformance vary greatly.

(p. 30)

This suggests that underperformance is not a single phenomenon but a complex set of variables that interact in different ways in different school contexts. Therefore, simplistic uniform interventions are unlikely to be successful in improving such schools.

9.2.3 Relationships with external agencies

The findings also highlight the importance of external agencies supporting improvements in SfCC. It is important that external agencies articulate the aims, purposes and roles of the intervention in a clear and unambiguous manner at the outset of the intervention. For interventions to be effective there must be an appropriate balance between the levels of pressure and support applied to schools. The findings from this research would suggest an imbalance in the usual approach to external intervention. Teachers tend to perceive external interventions such as OfSTED to be underpinned by too much pressure with too little on-going appropriate support. For such interventions to generate improvement there must be an appropriate blend of pressure and support within a framework underpinned by mutual trust.

The inconsistency of external support is likely to be another key factor in the apparent failure of contemporary interventions. Teachers perceive variations within and between inspection teams, HMIs and LEAs. HMIs were generally perceived as more supportive than OfSTED. This may be rooted in the recent history of OfSTED as an Organisation and the longer-term reflections on the traditional role of HMIs prior to OfSTED's inception which tends to be perceived more positively by experienced staff.

The findings also suggest that when SfCCs are exposed to HMI monitoring visits, teacher relationships with these inspectors are more positive than their OfSTED counterparts. HMIs are also in a position to understand the complexities of context more readily due to multiple site visits to one school over a period of time. Arguably, if relationships are more positive and there is a greater understanding of context then the likelihood of teachers changing their practice is higher, and therefore the possibilities for improvement greater. There remains a lack of evidence pertaining to the extent that OfSTED can support school improvement in SfCC. However, perceptions became less positive the further one moved further away from the senior management team towards classroom teachers. Likewise this may support the historical socio-political reasons for differences as the older more experienced teachers tend to be in positions of responsibility. Conversely, it may be that classroom teachers perceived more threat from visits and felt they had more to lose if reported upon negatively. The schools also reported a wide variation in the quality of the support of HMIs and OfSTED inspections.

Schools also varied widely in how they perceived support from their LEAs. Variations in support experienced by schools could be explained as follows. First, it could be that some LEAs are better equipped to support such schools. This may be rooted in their previous experience of dealing with such schools or the quality of officers employed by the authority. Second, variation may be influenced internal structural issues within the supporting organisation including staffing

levels, size of organisation, type of organisation, for example, whether the LEA is a unitary authority or not or even the number of schools within the LEA deemed to be facing challenging circumstances.

A further point to note is that in the case of LEA support it is clear that challenging circumstances exist not only at school level but also at LEA level. The number of private contractors that have been put in place by central government in an attempt to improve “failing” are testimony to this. Third, school perception of the variation may be determined by the school itself. The individual school’s culture, capacity for change and development phase may be linked to how the school views external agencies. Whether the variations in support for SfCC from HMIs and LEAs were perceived or actual variations in behaviour remains unclear. Unfortunately, due to the limitations of time and funding data was not collected from HMIs or LEA officers as part of this research. However, teachers perceived variations within and across a number of schools it is likely that there is not a consistent approach or delivery of support for SfCC.

9.2.4 Role of leadership

Leadership has been identified as a key characteristic of effective schools (Sammons *et al.*, 1995) and has been widely associated with improving schools of all types (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994; Stoll and Fink, 1996). The characteristics of school leaders and the nature of leadership varied considerably within the SfCC schools visited during phases one and two of this research. The vignettes

presented in chapter seven illustrate the extent of this diversity. There was a wide variation in the headteachers time in post, type of post held and experience of the headteachers. One school had privately contracted interim senior management in place while others had short term LEA seconded headteachers. Some had recently appointed new permanent headteachers and others had long established headteachers. The extent to which the leadership was shared within the schools also varied. In some schools there was a very hierarchical top-down managerialist approach with the school being “*led from the front*” (Headteacher, school G) or “*dragged up by the boot laces*” (SMT School H). In other schools a more balanced approach was evident and in a minority of schools collaboration between teachers and the distribution of leadership was widespread.

It appeared that where schools exhibited more distributed forms of leadership, there were also greater levels of trust and collaboration between staff. Professional relationships also tended to be more decentralised with teachers having greater professional autonomy and perhaps relying more heavily on cross-hierarchical networks. Therefore, where leadership was more distributed higher levels of social capital appeared to exist. If this also holds true for the wider group of SfCC, the extent of dispersed leadership within SfCC could be used as a proxy indicator for improvement and effectiveness. This is further supported by Hargreaves (2001) arguments claiming that a school with high levels of social capital (broadly the ability to generate trust and sustain networks) will strengthen its intellectual capital (the ability to create and transfer

knowledge). Hargreaves also argues that the mechanisms used by improving and effective schools to increase their intellectual and social capital focus on developing strategies based on both innovative and evidence-based practice to achieve both moral and cognitive outcomes. Findings from recent research exploring improvement in challenging contexts suggest that successful schools tend to distribute leadership and develop innovative and evidence based improvement strategies (Harris *et al.*, 2003). Previously, West, Jackson, Harris and Hopkins (2000) set out nine propositions that they claim encapsulate 'post transformational' leadership. These propositions are also underpinned by the concept of dispersing leadership in order to improve a school. Many of the propositions are likely to apply to SfCC. However, empirical evidence (Harris *et al.*, 2003) suggests proposition seven holds particular resonance:

Leadership in continuously improving schools not only expands, but changes over time. Leadership repertoires and styles will evolve as the school's own cycle of development evolves.

(West *et al.*, 2000, p. 47)

It may be that as a SfCC's attainment begins to rise, external pressures decrease. It could be that as pressure and high levels of external monitoring and intervention decrease, internal confidence, trust and collaboration, and thus social capital, within the organisation rises. In turn, it could be argued that

increased social capital is likely to support more dispersed forms of leadership (see 9.4). If this speculation holds true, then improvement can be viewed as an upward self-fulfilling cycle.

9.2.5 Importance of networks

The findings from this research suggest that when schools are given the opportunity to network with each other they find this a valuable experience. Some networks are developing that serve or include SfCC (Chapman, Allen and Harris, 2004). However, this remains an under conceptualized and explored area. The two schools involved with the IQEA programme that took part in this research recognized the importance of developing professional relationships across schools to support improvements in teaching and learning. LIG has encouraged SfCCs to work together and some SfCCs are involved in SfECC, IQEA, HRS or NLC programmes but involvement remains limited and often unevenly distributed on a national scale. If SfCC are to benefit from working collaboratively perhaps more coherence in intervention and network generation is needed at a local, regional and national level. Alternatively, larger scale networks and databases may have the potential to support the transfer of ideas and knowledge between schools therefore, building intellectual capital (Hargreaves, 2001) within the wider group of SfCCs. Such a database could include contact information and a note on the context of each school, details of the strategies for improvement that have been attempted within the school and summary of the schools' strengths and current areas for development. This may support the development of organically

driven networks where schools could chose to opt in or out depending on their short, medium and longer term needs and situation.

Networking has become very popular in the last few years. This is demonstrated by the popularity of interventions and initiatives that are underpinned by networking activity. It is becoming accepted that networking is a profitable activity to engage in and it is perceived as a powerful lever for change and improvement. However, as yet the research evidence to support this remains limited. Therefore, the tangible benefits of such activity remains unclear and an important area for further research. Thus, whether networking for improvement has the power to build the capacity in all SfCC remains to be seen. It would seem likely that within the group of SfCC there are some schools and networks that are more suited to this type of activity and others less so. This would suggest that if all SfCC were to be involved in networks, these networks would need to exhibit different configurations and architecture within flexible frameworks of practices that were governed by differentiated approaches to networking and improvement depending on the contexts and needs of the schools within the networks.

9.2.6 School capacity for change

The findings from this research indicate a wide variation in how schools responded to external interventions. Within the more fragile or low capacity schools the regularity that they are exposed to the risk of special measures or

serious weaknesses through a compressed inspection cycle, combined with the volatile and uncertain context in which they operate appears to have led to a more short-term view of improvement than one may expect. This can result in the development of a series of cyclical short-term strategies and 'quick fixes' linked to previously prescribed key issues.

Arguably, these preoccupations may have inhibited the school from building capacity to become a learning community. Conversely, the high capacity schools within this research appear to have found it natural to invest resources in longer-term capacity building enterprises. The challenge appears to be to support the lower capacity SfCCs in a non-punitive developmental manner, that develops morale, confidence and capability as well as builds personal, interpersonal and organisational capacity (Mitchell and Sackney, 2000). Early individualised support to these schools may fostered the confidence, trust and relationships necessary to develop a learning community and explore more creative longer-term solutions (Chapman and Harris, forthcoming).

Schools with the higher capacity for change rated involvement, co-ordination, leadership, enquiry and planning most highly. This suggests a more positive organisational culture is operating within these schools. There is some evidence to support those schools with these conditions in place operate within a context of devolved power, autonomy and leadership which further enhances the capacity building process and development of a learning community.

9.3 External intervention and Change in schools facing challenging circumstances

The six key themes that have emerged from this research highlight the complexity of generating school improvement in schools in challenging contexts. Inspection evidence suggests that government led reforms are failing to significantly improve SfCCs (Gray, 2000; OfSTED, 2004b). The findings from this thesis would seem to support the position externally imposed reforms have limited impact on SfCC. Hargreaves (2003) provides some recent insights into this situation. He argues that the knowledge base pertaining to the management of change has been largely ignored by central government in their efforts to reform the educational system. He highlights three key issues with these attempts at major reform:

- Speed of change;
- Scope of issues addressed by change;

- Supporting teachers to implement change

The first, the speed of change, relates to the sheer volume of change rather than the way in which reforms have been implemented. Central government has introduced over 50 initiatives and interventions into schools at a rapid pace during the past seven years. In some cases this has led to problems with embedding the changes within schools and therefore the wider system because of competition for time, energy and resource (Woods, 2004). Findings from this thesis suggest that the magnitude and velocity of change may have led to a situation of '*intervention fatigue*', where teachers in SfCCs feel hardened or immune to change, disenfranchised by change, or even alienated to central government reforms.

Second, the scope of issues addressed by reforms have been inadequate argues Hargreaves (2003). It would appear that in most cases interventions are managed at various departmental levels within government, therefore the DfES are responsible for delivering educational policy. Therefore, while the rhetoric has involved sound-bites calling for '*joined up thinking*' the likelihood is that in reality a more individualised approach reliant on small teams within departments delivering policies in isolation has prevailed. Thus, it may be that it might be necessary to develop reforms that are not reliant on current structural arrangements for implementation via government departments are likely only to have limited powers in raising the performance of schools, especially those

facing challenging circumstances. The diversity of barriers to school improvement (external and internal) experienced by SfCC combined with their own cultural diversity serve to produce a unique mix of conditions that will require a unique set of strategies to address these issues. The strategies are likely to be found in a range of government departments responsible for areas such as education, health, transport, employment etc. Therefore, it would seem that a coherent social improvement policy may serve the improvement of SfCCs better than a school improvement policy. Third, Hargreaves (2003) argues the support provided to teachers responsible for implementing these changes has varied in both quality and quantity. Consequently, findings within this thesis have reported that teachers perceived wide variations in the support received from inspectors and HMIs and that they recognized the limitations in the short-term support.

9.3.1 Key principles of successful external intervention

Much has been written about the possible methods and approaches to achieving externally driven school improvement. Some researchers have focused on alternatives to the current inspection arrangements as an important area for development (OfSTIN, 1997; MacBeath, 1999; Ferguson *et al.*, 2000; Learmonth, 2001) including recognising the importance of combining internal and external perspectives (Barber, 1996; Gray and Wilcox, 1995). Other researchers have attempted to conceptualise and develop externally driven school improvement programmes not focused on accountability mechanisms. Many of these programmes exhibit characteristics of the so called '*third wave*' school

improvement (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001) that tend to rely on a blend of pressure and support, internal and external control and top down versus bottom up approaches. It is within this context of third wave school improvement that the findings from this research suggest that frameworks for future externally driven improvement interventions should adhere to the following key principles if they are likely to deliver school improvement in challenging circumstances:

- ***Context specificity*** Interventions must be sensitive to local needs and flexible enough to support improvement in schools at different stages of development, exhibiting diverse cultural typologies, structures and perhaps most importantly differential capacities for change.
- ***Change at all levels-*** Interventions must identify meaningful areas for change at all levels within schools. Appropriate levers must then be used to facilitate the changes with the aid of specialised local knowledge. Space must be created within these schools to develop confidence and a risk taking culture where staff and students are comfortable in experimenting with their practice.
- ***Sustained support-*** In order to generate sustainable improvements the interventions must focus on developing on-going relationships that support to facilitate the change process. External interventions must move beyond providing accurate diagnosis to a situation where individualised on-going support is provided to move the organisation forward.

These core principles, it is argued from this thesis, must be central to external interventions if outside agencies are to deliver interventions that can legitimately claim *'improvement through intervention'*. It is suggested that interventions founded on these key principles have the potential to redefine relationships between the school, local stakeholders and outside agencies providing the opportunity to effectively implement, support and monitor change. From this base, local, regional and national networks could be built to share ideas and best practice. This improved communication between various stakeholders and re-engagement at the local level could move thinking from considering systemic improvement in terms of balancing centralisation or decentralisation to a position where regionalisation may be considered a viable alternative. New structures supporting regionalised decision making combined with a change in the blend of pressure and support may contribute to improving the life and work of teachers and increase the possibilities for school improvement that the current interventions have failed to yield. The following section outlines a typology for school improvement in challenging circumstances and some strategies for improvement that may support the improvement of these schools if the principles of improvement discussed in this section underpin future developmental activity.

9.3.2 The challenge of improving schools facing challenging or difficult contexts revisited

There is a general acknowledgement and recognition that the recent improvement strategies implemented between 1997 and 2002 have inevitable limitations and that new approaches to improvement are required. For example evidence from the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies suggests that despite strong gains early on recently the impact of these strategies has decreased (Earl *et al.*, 2003)

In the USA the evaluation evidence from New American Schools (NAS) formed in 1991 to create and develop whole school approaches to school improvement has similarly pointed towards the limitations of the potential of externally driven reform packages to impact positively on teaching and learning. New American Schools has involved over 4000 schools using 7 design programmes. The evaluation report states however that the *“initial hypothesis, that, by adopting a whole school design a school could improve its performance, was largely unproven”* (Rand 2002, p. 37). In general, the evaluation concludes that in those schools where implementation of the designs were initially high (over a four year period) subsequently degrees of implementation weakened and outcomes decreased. In short, the NAS initiative was an experimental approach to school reform that highlights the difficulties of initiating and disseminating large-scale educational

improvement. Thus, contemporary evidence suggests that externally driven school improvement is a challenging task in itself but to sustain any improvements over time may be beyond possibility.

In the UK successful school improvement projects and programmes, even those proving to be most effective, have adopted a fairly uniform approach to school development and change (Harris, 2001). Yet this thesis and other recent work on SfCC suggest that new programmes of school improvement and intervention need to embrace context specificity (Reynolds, Harris and Clarke, 2004). However, ways of categorising and differentiating programmes of intervention remain relatively underdeveloped.

The most developed work in this area (Hopkins *et al.*, 1997 and Hopkins 2001) highlights the need for a 'fit' between programme and the school's developmental needs (see chapter three for details). This work suggests that schools that are already the least developed and the least able to improve themselves will require a high degree of external support and intervention. However, it perpetuates the (false) assumption often made by policy makers that school performance is inextricably linked to school attainment in terms of academic outcomes. Therefore, the typology implies that type I schools will tend to be low attaining schools. While this may hold true in some cases it fails to accurately represent the complexity of the situation for SfCC. This thesis suggests this is not case. Many of the case study schools (and others in the wider group of SfCC for

example see Chapman, 2003; Chapman and Russ forthcoming) have been identified as improving by OfSTED and value added scores and other data would suggest these schools are performing above rather than below expectations.

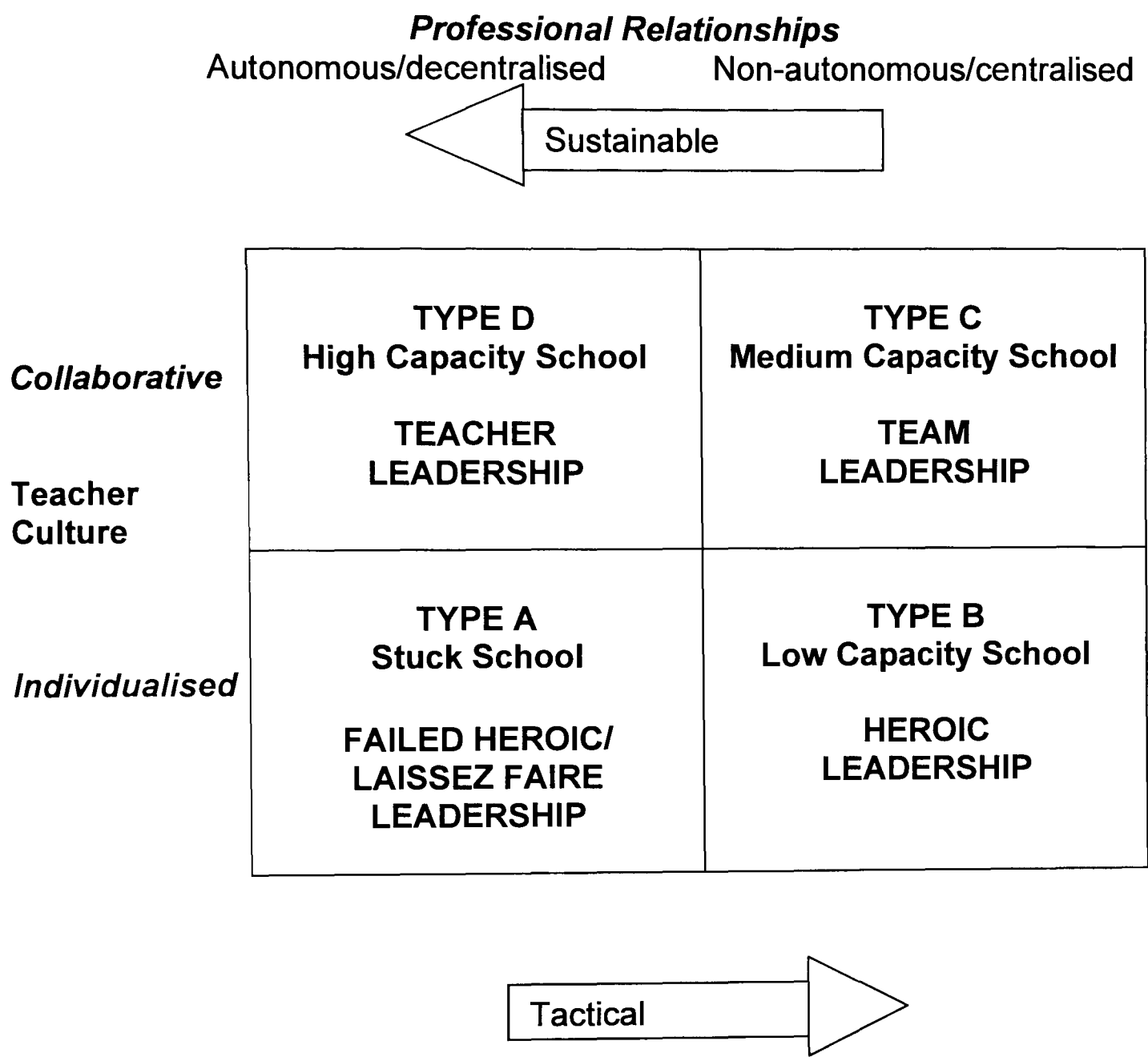
There is also an inherent danger if the principles of this typology are adhered to for policy making purposes, that while strong intervention strategies might yield the quickest gains in performance within some low performing SfCC schools they might also reinforce cultures of dependency among teachers and militate against the possibility of generating the internal capacity for improvement. In addition, for higher performing SfCC such interventions may have an adverse effect. Not only may these schools may resent such an approach it may also hinder internal improvement efforts designed to develop organisational capacity. Furthermore, by simply differentiating between high, middle and low capacity schools there is a possibility of what Hargreaves (2004, p. 32) has termed 'the apartheid of improvement' where the strategies applied in low performing (attaining) school contexts serve to perpetuate their restricted capacity. A way of avoiding this particular trap for SfCC is to begin to delineate the constructs of attainment and performance by seeking to match the developmental capacity of the school to a set of improvement strategies accounting for context. In order to achieve this, initial diagnosis of the school's growth capacity is needed. The typology presented in the following section is based on the work of Stoll and Fink (1996) and Hopkins (2000) but aims to differentiate more clearly between schools in

challenging circumstances and are therefore low attaining rather than all schools that possess low capacity or have been identified as failing.

9.4 Moving towards context-specific improvement for schools facing challenging circumstances

The typology presented below (figure 9.1) uses two dimensions to delineate between different types of SfCC. The first axis indicates a continuum from an individualized teacher culture to a collaborative teacher culture (Hargreaves, 1994). The second axis offers a continuum between non-autonomous professional relationships and autonomous professional relationships. The typology is intended as a heuristic device for categorizing schools and a mechanism for exploring differentiated approaches to improving schools in challenging circumstances. This analysis provides four different school types.

Figure 9.1: A Typology of Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances



(Chapman, 2004)

9.4.1 TYPE A: The stuck school and associated strategies

These schools tend to exist in a state of educational crisis. Relationships within these schools are often fractured and teachers survive through individual strength or existence within small cliques. In general professional relationships can be identified as autonomous and teacher culture as individualized. The

overall knowledge and skills base within these organizations are insufficient and teachers often have few CPD opportunities. The structures in place to support the schools are inefficient and ineffective. Variations in working practices are usually significant with the consequence that policies are not adhered to consistently. There is little or no systematic use of data to inform teaching and learning in these schools. Leadership in these schools usually falls into one of two categories *laissez faire*, where there is an absence of any structured approach or *failed heroic* where the leadership team has attempted to generate improvement through a top down autocratic approach to change and failed.

Within this type of school external intervention or approaches to improvement are unlikely to succeed unless the underlying structural and cultural problems are addressed. The main focus for attention has to be on securing higher degrees of trust and confidence among staff. The imposition of an externally imposed and tightly prescribed programme of improvement is unlikely to succeed in this type of school unless relationships among staff improve. Without attention to the emotional climate within the school, research would suggest that the potential for change and development will be significantly reduced (Harris, 2003). As these schools are locked in a downward spiral it is likely that they will require intensive re-structuring and investment to halt the decline.

9.4.2 TYPE B: The low capacity school and associated strategies

These schools operate within a climate of high levels of formal external and internal accountability. Professional relationships within these schools are non-autonomous with most teachers working under a prescriptive remit from the senior team. The teacher culture is usually individualised and the knowledge and skill base low. Although the need for increased levels of CPD has been recognized, as yet, due to the external pressures that the organization faces the amount of CPD that teachers experience is negligible. The senior team will have put new structures in place. High levels of monitoring pervade all areas of school life in an attempt to minimize the variations in practices.

In many cases the headteacher will have only recently been appointed to the school, in others there may be an interim management team in place or a long serving headteacher who has had to change their own leadership style a short space of time. Schools in this category will be aware of their problems and will show some willingness to escape from them, but their efforts will often be unfocussed or poorly supported. The key to commencing the capacity building process in such schools is to move the focus from maintenance to development by identifying a group of staff to lead staff development and change (Clarke, in press). This remit for this 'school improvement group' will be to ensure that change is manageable and focused directly on teaching and learning. Schools in this category need to develop expertise from within the school rather than relying on external input.

9.4.3 TYPE C: The medium capacity school and associated strategies

These schools have experienced rising examination results and have engaged in school improvement for some time. Professional relationships in these schools tend to be non-autonomous but the senior team will have delegated many leadership responsibilities to middle managers. Teacher culture is moving towards the collaborative, with teachers regularly working together within departments and sometimes across departments and phases. Professional development needs of individuals are starting to be met and CPD opportunities are increasing within the school. Data is considered to be important by middle managers and is used regularly within departments to inform decision-making.

These schools have well-established links with the community and local FE sector. The senior team in these schools has recognized the transition from one growth stage to another and is keen to distribute leadership to middle managers, whilst ensuring that the mechanisms are in place to ensure and maintain accountability. These schools are already building internal capacity and need to be provided with opportunities to extend and expand their teaching repertoires. Here carefully selected and targeted external programmes of support and development will be helpful. However, it will be important that the school selects the precise mix of programmes and they match the developmental focus that the school is following.

9.4.4 TYPE D: The high capacity school and associated strategies

These schools are leading the way and have built the internal capacity for change. The teacher culture in these schools is collaborative with teachers regularly working with each other throughout the school and also with teachers from other schools. Few formal monitoring/accountability systems are needed as there are high levels in informal accountability because teachers work from a position of trust and mutual respect. As a result professional relationships within the school tend to be fully autonomous with teachers being given significant responsibility for day-to-day and strategic decision-making. Pupils, parents and the wider community are also involved with many aspects of school life. CPD is viewed as the key to school improvement and individuals are encouraged to explore their own interests and needs in addition to those specifically outlined in the school development plan. These schools have developed strong networks with other educational organisations and the wider community. The senior team distributes leadership and provides opportunities for all to develop their leadership skills within the school.

High capacity schools have the internal conditions in place to improve and to secure higher levels of pupil attainment. The main challenge for these schools will be sustaining improvement over time. The evidence would suggest that schools do not often sustain improvement in the long term because of external and internal factors such as staff turnover, pupil mobility, changes in employment patterns and that the resulting effect on staff morale can be detrimental. Very few

responses to school underperformance have focused on engaging long term strategies such as distributing leadership and succession planning, retaining and building high quality teachers and creating a strong and long lasting partnership with parents. These would seem to be the important strategies for a school that has already built the internal capacity for change.

9.5 Conclusion

While the above categories or types of schools are acknowledged to be relatively crude, it remains the case that the importance of diagnosing a school's growth state is of paramount importance if improvement strategies are to match to individual needs of the school. The school improvement literature (Stoll, Reynolds, Creemers and Hopkins, 1996; Hopkins, Harris and Jackson, 1997; Hopkins 2001) pays considerable attention to the importance of the concept of context specificity, and its relationship with school improvement within the educational system. As Hopkins, (2001, p. 159) notes:

authentic school improvement strategies need to pay attention to context, [the argument is] that a wider range of improvement options should be made available to schools and more intelligence used in linking improvement strategy to school need.

The call for context specific improvement is well established. As Stoll *et al.*, (1996, p. 141) argue:

what is needed to develop schools are combinations of improvement and effectiveness practices and strategies appropriate to the nature of individual schools. For a school that is ineffective and just starting the process of development, the strategies may be different from a school that has been developing for some time: the former may need an 'apprenticeship' orientation involving giving the school knowledge from outside, while knowledge the latter may be sufficiently professionally competent to develop its own good practice and the development based upon it.

Datnow *et al.*, (2002, p. 39) also highlight the importance of context specificity arguing that 'all change is local' and questioning the proposition that models developed in one school can be successfully transported to other schools with entirely different teacher and student compositions. While some interventions market their approaches on the basis that they can be implemented in any school, at any time, in reality the context is really important in school reform. One of the most consistent findings that emanates from the research literature is the degree of variability of improvement due to local circumstances and contextual differences. It shows that the variability in implementation is often

due to local contextual demands, constraints or differences. School improvement is rarely a linear, rational process where programmes are uniformly or fully implemented. Even where programmes or policies are relatively straightforward they are implemented very differently across localities, schools and classrooms (Elmore and Sykes, 1992).

When reform fails, the technical rational perspective, which dominates the design and implementation process, places the blame on those teachers, schools or LEAs that did not implement the model successfully. What is rarely questioned is whether the reform or innovation was appropriate to the needs of particular schools, in particular contexts with particular types of pupils? Where reform succeeds, the evidence suggests that the implementation process involves an active and dynamic interaction between local educators and those driving the reform. In other words, reform is a two-way process between developers and local educators which allows context to be considered and factored into the implementation process.

It is increasingly clear that successful reform and school improvement efforts involve mutual adaptation and are co-constructed (Datnow *et al.*, 2002). The central message therefore is that 'context matters' when studying school level reforms' and when considering alternative approaches to school improvement and change. However, for the most part, in practice a 'one size fits all model' still prevails in most systems and policies. This thesis highlights the importance of

moving beyond a rhetorical call for context specific interventions to actually developing and delivering the differential strategies needed to improve individual schools within the SfCC group.

This thesis also argues that within this relatively small group of schools deemed to be facing challenging circumstances a diverse range of characteristics exist. Each school exhibits a unique *organisational mix* of improvement trajectory and level of effectiveness, development phase, capacity for change and cultural typology. It has become widely accepted that developing a positive culture within a school is closely associated to successful school improvement. Therefore, contextually specific school improvement strategies must be developed that are tailored to the precise nature of the presenting culture of the individual schools. (Stoll *et al.*, 1996) Thus, successful improvement interventions need to be sensitive to individual SfCCs development phase, capacity for change and school culture rather than relying on crude assumptions relating to the group as a whole.

Those schools found at the very trailing edge of the educational system will also require significant cultural change in order to facilitate significant improvement. Both structural and cultural change is necessary for school improvement (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994). Yet, there is base line below which relationships and trust cannot evolve positively within an organisation. Clarke (in press) labels the base line condition 'bounded instability' where improvement is impossible without major structural change and support. Therefore, building collaborative cultures

and developing professional autonomous relationships is the key to successful innovation. Moreover, the improvement strategies adopted by each new type of school will be dependent on their particular growth state or type.

We undoubtedly need to know much more about improving schools in difficult circumstances and particularly how such schools sustain improvement over time. Increasingly, the evidence base is pointing towards the possibilities and potential of learning communities in building the capacity for school improvement (Hargreaves, 2003). This offers a powerful way of generating opportunities for teachers to work together. As the long term patterning of educational inequality looks set to remain, schools facing challenging circumstances must look for strategies and approaches to assist their school, in their context with their students. This necessitates a much more differentiated approach to intervention that seeks to ensure a fit between the cultural state of the school and the developmental strategies employed. This will require careful diagnosis and an accurate selection of strategies that best match the prevailing conditions that vary within SfCC.

If the goal of raising performance in SfCC is to be achieved, school improvement approaches that neglect to address the inherent diversity and variability across and within schools in the same broad category will fail to work. While there are no easy answers or neat solutions to improving SfCC, it is clear that undifferentiated solutions are unlikely to raise student performance and results. A more finely

differentiated and targeted programme of intervention for schools in challenging circumstances, and those outside this category, is needed if the goal of transforming educational systems is to be realised.

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**Appendix 3.1: Characteristics of schools identified as
facing challenging circumstances**

TEXT CUT OFF IN ORIGINAL THESIS

[illegible]

School Name	DfE Number	School Name	% FSM (ASC 2000)	15 year old pupils	% pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE/GNVQ			with SEN (with and without statement) (ASC 2000)	with SEN (no statement) (ASC 2000)	with SEN (statement) (ASC 2000)	pupils (ASC 2000)	g Flag	at (end summer 2000)	at 12/10	Other Data															
					2000	1999	1998																							
Redden Court School	3114001	Redden Court School	31	111	23	24	20	20.5	14.7	5.8	550	1	0	0	0	0	4	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	15	27	9	16		
The Royal Liberty School	3114025	The Royal Liberty School	17	80	26	22	29	18.0	13.9	4.1	511	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	18	35	13	25			
King's Wood School	3114039	King's Wood School	38	101	16	16	10	32.8	23.9	8.9	762	1	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	2	0	1	10	13	11	14			
Evelyns Community School	3124004	Evelyns Community School	38	123	21	9	13	34.5	29.2	5.2	746	1	0	0	0	0	17	1	27	9	17	3	27	108	14.5	77	103			
John Penrose School	3124006	John Penrose School	20	55	15	25	27	33.2	24.0	9.2	425	1	0	0	0	0	12	8	0	2	0	1	1	27	6.4	24	5.6			
Hounslow Manor School	3134021	Hounslow Manor School	43	149	26	17	21	28.2	25.6	2.6	957	3	3	0	0	0	80	109	141	70	19	0	77	532	55.6	462	483			
Longford Community School	3134022	Longford Community School	29	188	22	28	34	26.2	22.5	3.7	1,125	2	3	0	0	0	20	7	52	22	3	3	48	165	14.7	108	9.6			
Eastfields High School	3154055	Eastfields High School	32	99	17	17	18	35.4	28.7	6.6	376	1	0	0	0	0	30	1	12	22	9	3	12	160	42.6	47	12.5			
Bishopsford Community School (Fresh Start)	3154061	Bishopsford Community School (Fresh Start)	35	118	12	13	18	37.3	30.9	6.3	459	2	0	0	1	0	7	50	14	10	1	6	30	138	30.1	29	63			
Forest Gate Community School	3164008	Forest Gate Community School	47	180	37	21	30	16.6	13.5	3.1	1,031	3	1	0	0	0	81	23	204	151	244	2	86	868	84.0	763	74.0			
Little Ilford School	3164015	Little Ilford School	54	277	19	22	16	16.7	12.3	4.3	1,312	1	1	0	0	0	120	14	238	178	318	1	64	964	73.5	924	70.4			
Rokeby School	3164016	Rokeby School	52	197	25	20	25	27.1	22.3	4.8	1,060	1	1	0	0	0	177	51	95	106	168	3	121	811	76.5	649	61.2			
Brampton Manor School	3164031	Brampton Manor School	49	284	27	25	28	27.9	22.8	5.1	1,612	3	1	0	0	0	190	45	87	136	80	4	164	787	48.8	678	42.1			
Cumberland School	3164033	Cumberland School	47	119	23	13	15	38.7	30.1	8.5	869	1	1	0	0	0	136	19	20	11	25	10	38	300	34.5	221	25.4			
Eastlea Community School	3164034	Eastlea Community School	44	159	21	18	13	25.4	19.0	6.4	1,058	1	1	1	0	0	247	20	19	32	26	10	78	498	47.1	334	31.6			
The Royal Docks Community School	3164036	The Royal Docks Community School	43	210	19			31.9	22.0	9.9	1,202	2	1	0	0	0	99	25	28	27	46	29	54	341	28.4	308	25.6			
Christ's Church of England Comprehensive	3184603	Christ's Church of England Comprehensive	42	38	13	35	20	55.9	52.0	4.0	202	2	0	0	0	0	17	17	4	0	0	0	18	116	57.4	22	10.9			
Carshalton High School for Boys	3194000	Carshalton High School for Boys	18	170	23	27	23	21.3	17.4	3.9	1,043	2	0	0	0	0	15	8	13	4	3	5	11	75	7.2	32	3.1			
Stanley Park High School	3194015	Stanley Park High School	27	143	24	31	25	18.8	15.0	3.9	908	2	0	0	0	0	16	3	16	4	3	6	17	82	9.0	56	6.2			
Aveling Park School	3204060	Aveling Park School	33	120	33	23	41	34.2	33.2	1.0	596	3	1	0	0	0	27	38	21	65	3	2	20	228	38.3	107	18.0			
Heathcote School	3204063	Heathcote School	34	103	29	24	27	28.8	25.5	3.3	542	3	1	1	0	0	34	23	11	20	3	3	8	185	34.1	41	7.6			
Warwick School for Boys	3204065	Warwick School for Boys	40	64	28	22	21	29.4	26.3	3.0	528	3	1	0	0	0	57	37	25	124	6	3	95	393	74.4	337	63.8			
The McEnlee School	3204070	The McEnlee School	44	175	15	17	16	28.2	23.5	2.7	767	1	1	0	0	0	71	22	11	88	8	2	13	309	40.3	160	20.9			
Rush Croft School	3204074	Rush Croft School	27	135	28	24	30	26.7	23.0	3.7	840	3	1	0	0	0	30	64	21	43	9	3	0	230	27.4	125	14.9			
Kelmscott School	3204075	Kelmscott School	39	113	34	24	33	32.8	29.5	3.3	891	3	1	0	0	0	28	56	66	310	7	3	11	564	63.3	360	40.4			
Saltley School	3304008	Saltley School	63	163	31	17	13	17.8	16.8	1.0	899	3	1	0	0	0	5	0	9	526	31	1	82	672	74.7	424	47.2			
Waverley School	3304009	Waverley School	63	122	14	15	17	36.5	35.4	1.1	655	1	1	0	0	0	10	0	17	373	90	0	53	564	86.1	517	78.9			
Kings Heath Boys' School	3304063	Kings Heath Boys' School	54	86	16	22	26	41.7	39.8	1.8	379	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	27	149	9	0	12	225	59.4	167	44.1			
Sheldon Heath Community School	3304081	Sheldon Heath Community School	60	135	22	19	18	41.9	40.2	1.7	903	1	1	0	0	0	4	0	53	152	10	1	60	335	37.1	209	23.1			
The College High School	3304083	The College High School	51	150	18	12	16	36.2	33.1	3.1	1,065	1	1	0	0	0	10	0	67	55	14	2	79	367	34.5	134	12.6			
Washwood Heath Technology College	3304084	Washwood Heath Technology College	52	187	32	23	29	17.5	16.7	0.7	1,255	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	10	803	90	1	66	1028	81.9	865	68.9			
Sir Wilfrid Martineau School	3304090	Sir Wilfrid Martineau School	45	174	11	12	16	24.3	23.8	0.6	1,044	1	1	1	0	0	4	0	8	20	0	2	73	193	18.5	40	3.8			
Bartley Green Community School	3304108	Bartley Green Community School	48	118	28	19	19	42.5	33.1	9.3	718	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	43	88	12.3	4	0.6			
Perry Beeches School	3304109	Perry Beeches School	34	133	17	18	26	43.4	41.1	2.3	830	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	134	70	16	1	91	443	53.4	219	26.4			
Dame Elizabeth Cadbury School and Sixth F	3304129	Dame Elizabeth Cadbury School and Sixth F	31	106	25	24	25	25.8	16.4	9.3	621	1	1	0	0	0	1	17	21	4	2	2	83	153	24.6	47	7.6			
Harborne Hill School	3304144	Harborne Hill School	44	85	20	9	8	28.2	26.8	1.4	429	1	1	0	0	0	8	0	0	33	31	2	10	78	258	60.1	81	18.9		
Turves Green Boys' School	3304188	Turves Green Boys' School	21	124	21	35	36	14.0	11.5	2.5	643	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	2	9	22	3.4	8	0.9			
Wheeler Lane School	3304193	Wheeler Lane School	33	112	34	24	28	18.7	17.3	1.4	588	3	1	0	0	0	3	0	59	133	5	1	38	267	45.4	191	32.5			
Hodge Hill School	3304201	Hodge Hill School	33	249	15	15	13	17.7	16.8	1.1	1,297	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	18	222	13	1	99	456	35.2	344	28.5			
Stockland Green School	3304206	Stockland Green School	39	110	15	21	6	40.3	32.5	7.8	591	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	22	46	5	2	59	208	34.9	66	11.2			
Handsworth Wood Girls' School	3304207	Handsworth Wood Girls' School	46	117	24	34	26	51.1	50.5	0.6	616	2	1	0	0	0	10	0	139	194	80	6	53	587	95.3	389	63.1			
Castle Vale School	3304214	Castle Vale School	38	89	24	15	18	20.9	19.3	1.6	637	1	1	0	0	0	14	1	0	0	1	0	1	33	50	7.8	3	0.5		
Kings Norton High School	3304217	Kings Norton High School	61	71	14	31	13	22.8	20.7	2.1	719	2	1	0	0	0	4	0	4	2	1	1	40	84	11.7	12	1.7			
Aston Manor School	3304220	Aston Manor School	77	114	28	23	19	29.7	27.9	1.8	616	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	16	73	143	3	65	523	84.9	239	38.8			
Holte School	3304223	Holte School	69	185	15	19	18	34.4	32.8	1.5	905	1	1	0	0	0	127	2	0	51	275	317	2	70	844	93.3	661	73.0		
Four Dwellings High School	3304228	Four Dwellings High School	56	102	25	17	5	30.6	27.4	3.3	519	1	1	0	0	0	4	0	10	5	6	3	46	203	39.1	25	4.8			
Broadway School	3304227	Broadway School	59	208	26	25	23	18.3	16.8	1.5	1,363	3	1	0	0	0	41	8	0	248	612	366	7	53	1335	97.9	1247	91.5		
Byng Kenrick Central School	3304244	Byng Kenrick Central School	46	139	19	19	25	41.7	40.8	0.9	918	1	1	0	0	0	27	3	0	4	22	1	0	59	116	12.6	34	3.7		
Moseley School	3304245	Moseley School	59	194	26	19	25	27.8	26.3	1.5	1,278	3	1	0	0	0	68	15	0	101	840	55	1	112	1192	93.3	1087	85.1		
Yardleys School	3304248	Yardleys School	48	155	20	24	27	18.8	18.1	0.7	879	1	1	0	0	0	33	3	3	157	281	35	0	84	596	67.8	475	54.0		
Park View School	3304323	Park View School	63	100	35	18	19	39.1	37.2	2.0	506	3	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	35	0	19	491	97.0	483	95.5			
Kingsbury School	3304330	Kingsbury School	37	158	23	24	11	21.2	19.6	1.6	932	1	1	0	0	0	96	0	0	30	76	0	5	72	279	29.9	86	9.2		
The Heartlands High School	3304332	The Heartlands High School	64	107	22	17	14	33.8	28.9	5.0	544	1	1	0	0	0	133	2	0	6	123	70	8	72	414	76.1	205	37.7		
Frankley Community High School	3304333	Frankley Community High School	54	65	20	21	14	26.3	23.1	3.2	441	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	26	30	6.8	2	0.5			
St Alban's C of E School	3304811	St Alban's C of E School	68	78	12	12	8	80.6	77.5	3.1	391	1	1	0	0	0	39	9	63	11	58	17	0	88	285	72.9	182	49.1		
St John Wall School	3304825	St John Wall School	43	112	34	23	25	38.9	38.6	0.3	635	3	1	0	0	0	196	4	0	163	18	7	5	99	492	77.5	235	37.0		
St Edmund Campion RC School	3304863																													

	DfEE Number	School name	% FSM (ASC 2000)	15 year old pupils	% pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE/GNVO			% pupils with SEN (with and without statement) (ASC 2000)	% pupils with SEN (no statement) (ASC 2000)	% pupils with SEN (statement) (ASC 2000)	Total pupils (ASC 2000)	Low attainment g Flag	EIC Flag	EAZ Flag	Schools on SM (end summer 2000)	Start (as at 12/10)	closed indicator	date	caribbean	american	asian	black	white	other	total	additional language					
					2000	1999	1998																								
	3344034	Smith's Wood School	40	126	13	20	14	45.5	44.7	0.8	924	1	2		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	50	50	5.4	1	0.1		
	3354015	T P Riley Community School	53	110	12	5	11	32.2	28.1	4.2	506	1	Cluster		1	0			0	1	2	0	21	0	2	0	26	5.1	23	4.5	
	3354018	Frank F Harrison Community School	31	108	11	14	15	45.8	40.4	5.4	740	1	Cluster		0	0			1	0	0	3	34	0	0	15	53	7.2	36	4.9	
	3354017	The Alunwell School	34	146	28	24	23	23.8	20.4	3.4	936	3			0	0			35	7	4	183	275	48	1	23	576	61.5	513	54.8	
	3354100	Darlston Community School	26	204	23	23	29	14.3	11.2	3.0	1,156	1	Cluster		0	0			23	0	0	155	44	73	0	22	317	27.4	267	23.1	
	3354107	Sneyd Community School	18	226	25	30	22	15.4	12.7	2.7	1,384	2	0		0	0			9	1	0	23	2	0	1	10	46	3.3	24	1.7	
	3354109	Manor Farm Community School	51	127	10	13	13	31.2	26.9	4.3	692	1	Cluster		0	0			0	0	0	25	50	0	0	19	94	13.6	66	9.5	
	3354602	Blue Coat Church of England Comprehensive	19	176	24	28	28	19.1	16.7	2.4	1,033	2	0		0	0			90	7	9	158	228	58	2	0	552	53.4	411	39.8	
	3355402	Shire Oak School	15	119	24	33	18	13.1	9.7	3.4	1,103	2	0		0	0			6	0	0	4	8	0	0	0	18	1.6	11	1.0	
Verhampton	3364108	The Northcote School	24	118	17	26	33	39.3	38.5	0.8	769	2	3	2.0	0	0			30	0	41	21	0	1	1	0	94	12.2	2	0.3	
Verhampton	3384115	Deansfield High School	36	82	30	18	21	29.6	27.0	2.6	530	3	3		0	0			28	0	48	29	2	0	0	0	105	19.8	30	5.7	
Verhampton	3384129	Pendelford High School	35	109	11	22	25	49.8	44.1	5.8	606	1	3		0	0			34	1	53	125	40	2	3	8	264	43.6	171	28.2	
Verhampton	3364139	Moreton Community School	54	81	12	12	7	55.7	49.9	5.8	521	1	3	2.0	1	0			41	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	44	8.4	3	0.6	
Verhampton	3364608	Our Lady and St Chad RC Comprehensive	34	144	27	23	33	35.5	31.6	3.9	829	3	3	2.0	0	0			86	12	0	63	0	0	0	7	168	20.3	57	6.9	
Walsley	3404003	Brookfield High School	57	136	29	20	20	19.8	14.9	4.9	799	3	1		0	0			0	0	2	0	2	0	0	2	8	0.8	0	0.0	
Walsley	3404005	Knowsley Hey School	50	174	15	21	18	18.8	16.4	2.4	898	1	1		0	0			2	0	3	1	0	0	1	2	9	1.0	0	0.0	
Walsley	3404008	Ruffwood School	57	245	24	24	23	33.0	27.7	5.3	1,221	1	1		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0.2	3	0.2
Walsley	3404017	Bowring Comprehensive School	50	177	21	17	18	25.1	20.6	4.5	864	1	1		1	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	9	1.0	2	0.2	
Walsley	3404607	St Edmund of Canterbury Catholic High Sch	76	120	14	19	22	24.5	20.5	3.9	633	1	1		0	0			0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.3	0	0.0	
Walsley	3404609	All Saints Catholic High School	53	228	24	20	26	22.1	18.7	3.4	1,307	1	1		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	0.8	1	0.1	
Walsley	3405400	St Thomas Becket Catholic High School	51	138	26	19	16	15.0	10.7	4.3	787	3	1		0	0			0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	0.4	0	0.0	
Walsley	3414308	West Derby School	38	232	31	25	29	26.9	24.8	2.1	1,409	3	1		0	0			2	8	2	3	0	2	4	10	31	2.2	7	0.5	
Walsley	3414404	Holly Lodge Girls' School	39	227	36	23	31	14.8	14.1	0.7	1,486	3	1		0	0			0	2	15	2	6	0	6	25	56	3.8	40	2.7	
Walsley	3414418	Anfield Community Comprehensive School	45	190	22	18	15	29.4	26.1	3.3	1,114	1	1		0	0			0	0	9	0	0	0	9	10	28	2.5	16	1.4	
Walsley	3414417	Breckfield Community Comprehensive Scho	82	114	18	11	7	39.3	35.4	3.9	534	1	1		1	0			2	1	1	0	0	0	2	4	10	1.9	6	1.1	
Walsley	3414419	Shorefields School	83	88	23	20	7	54.2	51.3	2.9	729	1	1	2.2	0	0			0	33	142	3	0	34	7	42	261	35.8	118	16.2	
Walsley	3414420	Fazakerley High School	41	133	16	19	18	22.4	20.5	1.9	755	1	1		0	0			0	3	3	0	1	0	2	3	12	1.6	5	0.7	
Walsley	3414422	The Queen Mary School	63	130	10	7	11	20.2	19.1	1.1	644	1	1		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0.5	1	0.2	
Walsley	3414423	Croxeth Community Comprehensive School	85	112	11	11	15	29.3	27.3	2.0	662	1	1		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	6	0.9	6	0.9	
Walsley	3414425	Broadgreen High School	54	194	22	21	18	37.8	32.4	5.4	1,250	1	1		0	0			3	7	9	3	3	0	17	28	70	5.6	57	4.6	
Walsley	3414426	Childwall Comprehensive School	58	203	20	18	18	41.9	41.0	0.9	1,272	1	1		0	0			14	45	108	7	6	18	34	7	239	18.8	113	8.9	
Walsley	3414428	New Heys Comprehensive School	42	188	21	16	18	38.0	34.7	1.3	1,015	1	1	2.1	0	0			8	23	24	1	0	2	7	6	71	7.0	35	3.4	
Walsley	3414431	Speke Community School	60	133	8	13	8	68.3	63.4	4.9	775	1	1	2.1	0	0			0	0	14	0	0	0	3						

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				2000	1999	1998												black caribbean	black african	black other	indian	pakistani	bangladeshi	chinese	other	total em pupils	% of EM pupils	English as a second language	% of pupils with English as an additional language	
3554814	St George's RC High School	24	106	25	32	38	19.6	17.3	2.3	479	2	1		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0.6	0	0.0		
3554620	All Hallows RC High School	49	74	19	17		21.3	18.5	2.7	437	1	1		0	0			5	4	0	0	0	0	2	11	2.5	5	1.1		
3564030	Avondale High School	37	158	32	19	22	30.4	27.0	3.4	822	3			0	0			0	1	11	0	12	0	1	25	3.0	16	1.9		
3574005	Hattersley High School	43	73	15	8	11	31.9	28.4	3.4	348	1	0		0	0			2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.6	0	0.0		
3574012	Stamford Community High School	34	127	13	15	15	17.8	13.4	4.3	507	1	0		0	0			0	1	3	24	89	16	5	3	141	27.8	134	26.4	
3574014	Littlemoss High School	21	104	26	22	33	17.1	13.7	3.5	608	3			1	0			3	1	0	4	13	2	3	1	27	4.4	20	3.3	
3584012	Broad Oak High School	59	85	22	14	22	22.5	19.5	3.1	426	1	0		0	0			8	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	11	2.6	1	0.2	
3584015	Lostock Community High School	37	188	24	18	22	69.7	65.3	4.3	880	1	0		0	0			48	3	43	10	8	2	2	11	127	14.4	30	3.4	
3584028	Stretford High School	43	135	25	22	16	20.0	17.7	2.2	716	1	0		0	0			66	5	16	181	163	2	10	50	493	68.9	326	45.5	
3594008	Kingsdown High School	43	124	7	12	7	37.1	27.6	9.5	504	1	0		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.2	0	0.0	
3594017	Rose Bridge High School	35	95	24	29	24	31.1	18.9	12.2	578	2	0		0	0			0	2	1	1	0	0	0	4	0.7	3	0.5		
3594020	Westleigh High School - A College of Techn	29	148	18	21	15	48.6	44.5	4.1	706	1	0		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0.3	2	0.3	
3594028	Mornington High School	24	191	34	23	27	34.1	29.4	4.6	928	3			0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	5	0.5	0	0.0	
3704001	Edward Sheerfen School	39	144	26	17	26	15.5	11.6	3.9	825	3	3		0	0			0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0.2	0	0.0	
3704005	Priory School and Sports College	33	208	21	30	17	22.6	18.0	4.6	889	2	3		0	0			0	1	0	3	0	0	1	0	5	0.6	3	0.3	
3704019	The Elmhist School	56	120	18	15	13	24.9	18.4	6.5	599	1	3		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.2	0	0.0	
3704026	Willowgarth High School	37	188	25	23	13	16.4	12.5	4.0	803	1	3		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
3704037	The Deane High School	34	228	25	18	23	30.5	25.6	4.9	1,193	1	3		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
3714014	Danum School	29	276	29	25	27	18.3	13.8	4.4	1,799	3	3		0	0			5	1	5	9	30	0	2	6	58	3.2	43	2.4	
3714020	Adwick School	28	242	21	17	22	28.9	24.9	4.0	1,325	1	3		1	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0.4	0	0.0		
3714022	Northcliffe School	34	149	21	20	21	23.8	20.0	3.9	822	1	3		0	0			1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0.4	0	0.0	
3714023	Hatfield High School	29	217	29	23	29	20.9	18.0	2.9	1,240	3	3		0	0			0	2	0	2	0	1	2	1	8	0.6	3	0.2	
3714034	Rossington High School	28	134	19	24	18	17.3	13.6	3.7	803	1	3		0	0			0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	0.5	1	0.1	
3714038	Campamoun School	30	128	15	24	25	16.1	12.5	3.6	757	1	3		0	0			3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0.5	1	0.1	
3724000	Clifton Comprehensive School	42	215	24	19	21	29.5	27.6	1.9	1,211	1	1		0	0			4	0	0	0	0	199	0	2	17	222	18.3	209	17.3
3724011	Wingfield Comprehensive School	24	88	27	24	22	22.0	19.7	2.3	641	3	1		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	12	1.9	0	0.0	
3724020	Thrybergh Comprehensive School	45	105	21	13	11	21.6	18.6	2.9	510	1	1		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	1	0.2	
3734215	The Herries School (Now 4281 Parkwood Hi	46	99	14	4	13	26.8	23.4	3.4	589	1	1		0	1	Closed	31/08/20	2	16	21	0	35	0	0	0	74	12.6	53	9.0	
3734225	Hinde House School	33	175	22	16	25	20.4	16.5	3.9	897	1	1		1	0			0	14	71	2	85	3	0	1	176	19.6	70	7.8	
3734228	Waltholme School	53	176	16	9	12	37.3	32.2	5.1	978	1	1	2.0		0			0	0	10	0	67	69	0	15	161	16.5	161	16.5	
3734233	Chaucer Community School	33	200	18	18	10	47.6	44.3	3.3	997	1	1		0	0			0	4	12	1	0	0	0	17	34	3.4	0	0.0	
3734253	Yewlands School	39	159	26	20	24	40.1	34.6	5.5	820	3	1		0	0			2	0	8	0	1	0	1	12	24	2.9	5	0.6	
3734254	Abbeydale Grange School	43	87	18	16	22	43.7	31.3	12.4	501	1	1		0	0			60	34	4	3	159	15	1	8	282	56.3	216	43.5	
3734258	Firth Park Community College	43	205	18	12	12	43.9	40.3	3.6	1,209	1	1		0	0			42	42	40	1	96								

	DfEE Number	School name	% FSM (ASC 2000)	15 year old pupils	% pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE/GNVQ			% pupils with SEN (with and without statement) (ASC 2000)	% pupils with SEN (no statement) (ASC 2000)	% pupils with SEN (statement) (ASC 2000)	Total pupils (ASC 2000)	Low attainment Flag	EIG Flag	EAG Flag	Schools on SM (end summer 2000)	Fresh Start (as at 12/10)	Open/closed indicator	Closure date	Ethnicity data from ASC 2000										total em pupils	% of EM pupils	EAL data from ASC 2000	
					black caribbean	black african	black other												indian	pakistani	bangladeshi	chinese	other	English as a second language	% of pupils with english as an additional language							
																										2000	1999	1998				
Newcastle upon Tyne	3914450	Walker Technology College	36	229	25	19	14	32.0	29.8	2.2	1,338	1	2		0	0			0	0	0	2	0	0	2	5	9	0.7	3	0.2		
Newcastle upon Tyne	3914480	Benfield School	38	120	26	21	25	24.7	21.3	3.3	811	3	2		0	0			2	0	0	4	4	0	2	2	14	1.7	15	1.8		
Newcastle upon Tyne	3914485	Kenton School	29	317	32	24	23	24.8	23.1	1.7	1,908	3	2		0	0			0	3	0	12	12	6	11	10	54	2.8	53	2.8		
Newcastle upon Tyne	3914498	West Gate Community College	61	200	8	10	6	42.4	40.1	2.3	1,409	1	2		0	0			0	2	2	7	140	120	2	24	297	21.1	291	20.7		
Newcastle upon Tyne	3914499	Firfield Community School (Fresh Start Blake)	47	71	4	9	7	36.4	29.0	7.4	434	1	2		0	1			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	0.9	4	0.9		
North Tyneside	3934016	King George V School	46	101	19	26	21	33.3	29.0	4.3	748	2	2		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0		
North Tyneside	3944014	Hylton Red House School	46	207	13	15	13	21.4	19.7	1.7	1,013	1	2	2.0	0	0			0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.2	2	0.2		
North Tyneside	3944017	Pennywell School	54	188	13	13	10	45.8	44.1	1.7	1,136	1	2	2.0	0	0			0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0.1	0	0.0		
North Tyneside	3944038	Castle View School	46	133	20	21	25	22.2	19.4	2.8	857	1	2		0	0			0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	0.5	0	0.0		
North Tyneside	3944071	Sandhill View School	52	141	23	25	15	33.7	32.0	1.7	830	1	2		0	0			0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	4	0.5	0	0.0		
North Tyneside	8014017	Portway Community School	29	105	24	21	28	29.3	26.9	2.4	752	1	2		0	0			3	0	2	0	6	0	2	7	20	2.7	8	1.1		
North Tyneside	8014028	Hengrove School	29	157	24	15	20	25.0	18.5	6.5	1,086	1	2		0	0			0	2	5	0	5	0	0	20	32	2.9	9	0.8		
North Tyneside	8014029	Lockleaze School	37	86	13	23	23	25.9	19.1	6.8	556	1	2		0	0			2	37	21	5	2	0	1	32	100	18.0	53	9.5		
North Tyneside	8014035	Lawrence Weston School	32	66	20	25	11	27.2	20.6	6.6	320	1	2		0	0			1	1	3	1	0	0	1	6	13	4.1	0	0.0		
North Tyneside	8014036	Monks Park School	26	101	26	25	37	22.8	18.2	4.6	753	3	2		0	0			4	4	16	5	8	3	2	42	82	10.9	19	2.5		
North Tyneside	8014037	Bedminster Down School	16	192	22	27	25	17.2	11.6	5.6	1,034	2	2		0	0			1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	12	1.7	1	0.1		
North Tyneside	8014038	Withywood Community School	35	128	23	15	10	31.5	22.7	8.8	852	1	2		0	0			0	0	10	0	0	1	0	0	11	1.3	1	0.1		
North Tyneside	8014042	Hatchlife Secondary School	22	118	25	28	25	33.3	29.5	3.8	818	2	2		0	0			0	0	2	0	0	0	0	10	12	1.5	0	0.0		
North Tyneside	8014045	Whitefield Fishponds Community School	24	94	19	25	39	33.0	27.8	5.2	636	1	2		0	0			28	16	55	32	55	18	1	59	264	41.5	120	18.9		
North Tyneside	8014046	Speedwell Secondary School	22	184	23	19	17	25.0	20.2	4.9	1,006	1	2		0	0			7	6	11	5	3	5	5	20	62	6.2	22	2.2		
North Tyneside	8014104	St George Community College	35	155	17	23	19	45.5	33.1	12.4	816	1	2	2.0	0	0			58	42	86	57	82	26	6	67	424	52.0	205	25.1		
South Gloucestershire	8034113	Filton High School	14	153	38	22	29	25.7	22.2	3.5	992	3			0	0			9	2	29	26	2	8	13	37	126	12.7	43	4.3		
South Gloucestershire	8034149	The Grange Community School	11	127	25	30	35	19.5	15.4	4.1	871	2	0		0	0			0	0	6	1	0	4	0	7	18	2.1	4	0.5		
Hartlepool	8054131	Dyke House Comprehensive School	44	149	25	25	18	26.7	24.3	2.3	937	1	2		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	5	0.5	3	0.3		
Hartlepool	8054132	Henry Smith School	36	178	21	20	26	31.9	30.1	1.8	921	1	2		0	0			0	0	0	2	1	0	1	5	9	1.0	4	0.4		
Middlesbrough	8064115	Langbaugh School	56	97	18	13	3	28.6	25.1	3.5	479	1	2		0	0			0	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	5	1.0	3	0.6		
Middlesbrough	8064122	Ormesby School	48	158	16	24	9	9.9	2.0	7.9	802	1	2		0	0			0	1	1	0	1	0	1	2	6	0.7	1	0.1		
Middlesbrough	8064135	Keldholme School	48	109	4	13	2	19.3	16.4	2.9	696</																					

DfEE Number	School name	M. FSM (ASC 2000)	M. pupils achieving 5+ A-C GCSE/ANVQ			M. pupils with SEN (with and without statement) (ASC 2000)	M. pupils with SEN (no statement) (ASC 2000)	M. pupils with SEN (statement) (ASC 2000)	Total pupils (ASC 2000)	Low attainment Flag	EAC Flag	EAC2 Flag	Schools on SM (end summer 2000)	Fresh Start (as at 12/10)	Open/ closed indicator	Closure date	Ethnicity data from ASC 2000							EAL data from ASC 2000				
			2000	1999	1998												black african	black caribbean	black other	indian	pakistani	bangladeshi	chinese	other	total non white	% of EM pupils	English as a second language	% of pupils with English as an additional language
			2000	1999	1998												black african	black caribbean	black other	indian	pakistani	bangladeshi	chinese	other	total non white	% of EM pupils	English as a second language	% of pupils with English as an additional language
8364111	The Martin Kemp Welsh School	23	171	20	22	24	34.7	31.7	3.0	744	1	0	1	0	Closed	31/06/20	0	0	3	0	0	0	5	0.7	0	0.0		
8374167	Kingfisher Secondary School (Now 4001 K)	37	77	10	17	17	35.1	23.3	11.8	424	1	0	1	0	1	Closed	31/06/20	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	2.4	15	3.5	
8374170	Sunrise Comprehensive School	21	149	19	22	32	12.6	8.1	4.5	818	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.1	54	6.6		
8404162	Bishop Barlingdon Comprehensive School	29	68	28	23	17	44.3	38.1	6.2	551	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8404176	Greenfield School Community and Arts Coll	20	130	25	24	41	15.8	11.9	3.9	671	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8404178	King James I Community College	33	144	26	25	21	29.7	23.6	6.1	817	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8404180	Sunrise School	30	99	19	29	22	26.5	19.8	6.7	600	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8404181	Dunham Glasgow Comprehensive School	28	71	28	24	35	10.8	8.3	2.5	916	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8404182	Deerness Valley Comprehensive School	25	116	21	30	26	26.1	21.3	4.9	638	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8404214	Dene House Comprehensive School	44	146	27	18	24	26.8	22.1	6.7	761	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8404215	Shotton Hall Comprehensive School	28	216	36	25	22	26.3	21.5	4.7	1,059	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8404280	Exington Community School	26	219	23	26	25	30.7	27.2	3.8	1,064	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8414283	Eastbourne Comprehensive School	28	117	16	24	18	44.8	39.9	4.9	770	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8454058	The Grove School	35	216	25	28	33	28.1	26.3	1.6	1,232	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8464000	East Brighton College of Media Arts (Fresh S	49	107	13	19	13	28.6	25.1	3.5	570	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8464022	Falmes High School	40	113	19	21	17	40.6	36.8	3.8	658	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8464072	Patcham High School	20	174	22	26	24	25.4	22.8	2.6	892	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
8504169	John Hunt of Everest Community School	16	70	11	29	28	49.1	46.6	2.5	395	2	0																

	DIEE Number	School name	% FSM (ASC 2000)	15 year old pupils	% pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE/GNVQ			% pupils with SEN (with and without statement) (ASC 2000)	% pupils with SEN (no statement) (ASC 2000)	% pupils with SEN (statement) (ASC 2000)	Total pupils (ASC 2000)	Low attainment g Flag	EIC Flag	EAZ Flag	Schools on SM (end summer 2000)	Fresh Start (as at 12/10)	Open/closed indicator	Closure date	Ethnicity data from ASC 2000										EAL data from ASC 2000		
					2000	1999	1998												black caribbean	black african	black other	indian	pakistani	bangladeshi	chinese	other	total em pupils	% of EM pupils	English as a second language	% of pupils with english as an additional language	
ex	8814000	The James Hornsby High School	35	211	5	12		26.8	24.9	1.9	907	1	0		0	0			1	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	5	0.6	2	0.2	
ex	8814303	Brays Grove School	19	165	23	26	22	35.0	32.3	2.7	792	2	0		0	0			0	0	0	0	7	2	5	1	15	1.9	12	1.5	
ex	8814323	Passmores Comprehensive School	15	140	25	30	26	21.2	18.4	2.8	749	2	0		0	0			0	1	14	1	1	0	0	6	23	3.1	3	0.4	
ex	8814343	Stewards School	21	129	30	24	29	26.8	24.3	2.5	635	3			0	0			0	0	8	0	0	0	11	4	23	3.6	15	2.4	
ex	8814530	St John's C of E School	13	153	31	24	35	20.9	19.5	1.4	853	3			0	0			2	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	7	0.8	7	0.8	
ex	8814680	De La Salle School	25	110	29	16	19	19.4	18.6	0.8	628	3			0	0			5	4	3	4	0	0	9	10	35	5.6	13	2.1	
ex	8815415	King Harold School	15	162	25	22	33	17.0	14.5	2.5	932	1	0	2.2	1	0			1	2	3	2	0	0	1	4	13	1.4	14	1.5	
ex	8815419	Castle View School	9	189	24	41	31	15.7	14.7	1.0	788	2	0		0	0			0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	3	0.4	1	0.1	
ex	8815445	Colbays High School	24	272	21	28	32	15.6	13.8	1.8	1,699	2	0	2.1	0	0			1	3	2	2	0	0	1	5	14	0.8	5	0.3	
ex	8815458	The Bairstable School	30	194	18	18	16	31.3	29.3	2.0	1,002	1	0		1	0			2	1	14	6	0	1	1	4	29	2.9	11	1.1	
utherland-on-Sea	8825430	The Thorpe Bay School	32	155	26	23	22	30.4	27.8	2.6	763	3		2.0	1	0			1	2	1	7	3	2	0	6	22	2.9	29	3.6	
urrock	8834292	St Chad's School	31	83	12	10	13	39.8	37.5	2.3	518	1	0		0	0			0	1	0	0	0	2	0	5	8	1.5	5	1.0	
urrock	8834299	The Ockendon School	23	112	23	24	18	22.6	21.2	1.4	645	1	0		1	0			15	0	0	0	1	0	2	6	24	3.7	8	1.2	
urrock	8834392	The Avelay School	31	103	18	9	14	33.2	30.4	2.8	578	1	0		0	0			0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	4	0.7	4	0.7	
urrock	8835409	Torella School	25	117	18	23	28	23.6	21.9	1.7	649	1	0		1	0			1	1	1	1	2	0	2	2	10	1.5	6	0.9	
urrock	8835437	The Grays School	27	182	27	16	30	21.0	19.3	1.8	914	3			0	0			0	2	2	13	20	8	1	7	53	5.8	63	6.9	
irelandshire	8844011	Haywood High School	19	112	18	21	10	27.6	22.0	5.5	649	1	0		1	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.3
orcestershire	8854019	The Harry Cheshire Community High School	19	140	30	24	15	24.9	22.8	2.1	478	3			0	0			1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	4	0.8	3	0.6	
orcestershire	8854035	The Abbey High School	19	131	27	25	32	23.6	21.4	2.3	533	3			0	0			17	3	0	1	137	3	1	2	164	30.8	146	27.4	
orcestershire	8854431	Worcester, The Elgar High School	30	153	16	24	19	31.0	28.2	2.8	762	1	0		0	0			0	0	0	1	5	0	2	5	13	1.7	13	1.7	
ent	8864031	Swanley School	20	105	23	20	18	53.6	49.7	3.9	593	1	0		0	0			1	4	0	1	0	0	2	3	11	1.9	6	1.0	
ent	8884085	Holmesdale Community School	20	88	26	11	10	37.2	32.8	4.4	390	3			0	0			1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.5	0	0.0	
ent	8884091	The Community College Whitstable	24	124	13	9	19	41.5	37.8	3.7	682	1	0		0	0			3	2	4	2	0	3	0	5	19	2.8	2	0.3	
ent	8864113	Astor School	22	224	38	23	32	18.9	16.8	2.1	1,357	3			0	0			4	3	0	8	4	3	2	3	27	2.0	15	1.1	
ent	8864114	Archers Court School	21	150	29	23	27	32.4	28.7	3.6	825	3			0	0			0	1	1	2	0	0	0	12	18	1.9	15	1.8	
ent	8864120	King Ethelbert School	29	155	25	12	8	51.0	48.0	3.0	765	1	0	2.0	0	0			7	3	2	0	0	1	2	7	22	2.9	8	1.0	
ent	8864123	The Hereson School	25	84	8	12	17	61.0	51.9	9.1	449	1	0	2.0	0	0			0	0	1	2	0	0	4	1	8	1.8	6	1.3	
ent	8864189	The Ramsgate School	45	108	3	7	10	55.1	48.1	7.0	597	1	0	2.0	0	0			0	1	0	0	2	0	2	2	7	1.2	13	2.2	
ent	8864193	The Eden Valley School	17	60	25	21	26	50.3	45.6	4.7	298	1	0		0	0			0	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	6	2.0	1	0.3	
ent	8884196	The Towers School	19	198	21	27	25	18.5	16.0	2.4	1,078	2	0		0	0			0	0	2	1	0	2	1	9	15	1.4	10	0.9	
ent	8864204	Wilmington Hall School	14	130	20	24	12	43.1	40.2	2.9	619	1																			

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					2000	1999	1998												black caribbean	black african	black other	indian	pakistani	bangladeshi	chinese	other							
Northamptonshire	8914757	The Queen Elizabeth's School	30	165	18	13	19	16.0	15.4	0.5	583	1	0		0	0	Open but proposed to		0	0	0	1	2	3	0	3	9	1.5	8	14			
Northamptonshire	8924001	Manning Comprehensive School	44	78	23	30	21	31.1	30.7	0.4	488	2	2		0	0			38	3	45	12	118	14	3	6	239	49.0	147	30.1			
Northamptonshire	8924046	William Crane School	50	120	7	2	8	41.6	41.2	0.4	529	1	2		1	0			6	1	10	1	3	0	0	2	23	4.3	1	0.2			
Northamptonshire	8924048	Glaiddale School	47	102	6	11	9	25.1	24.6	0.5	749	1	2		1	0			28	7	36	4	11	0	1	0	87	11.6	11	1.5			
Northamptonshire	8924050	William Sharp School	52	121	15	13	13	27.7	25.1	2.6	610	1	2		0	0			18	0	30	1	5	0	0	1	55	9.0	2	0.3			
Northamptonshire	8924051	Margaret Glen-Boll School	53	101	22	24	15	30.0	29.8	0.5	423	1	2		0	0			27	2	48	25	109	3	2	11	227	53.7	140	33.1			
Northamptonshire	8924060	Fairham Community College	37	106	22	25	12	28.8	28.8	0.0	608	1	2		0	0			3	2	11	0	0	0	0	3	19	3.1	0	0.0			
Northamptonshire	8924071	Elliott Durham School	48	98	15	11	10	32.3	32.1	0.2	471	1	2		0	0			43	0	55	8	21	1	4	8	140	29.7	30	6.4			
Northamptonshire	8924072	Big Wood School	33	99	21	30	26	24.2	23.7	0.5	596	2	2		0	0			20	2	20	0	1	0	0	3	46	7.7	2	0.3			
Northamptonshire	8924436	Henry Melish Comprehensive School	49	116	9	13	8	33.2	33.0	0.3	713	1	2		1	0	Open but proposed to		27	0	15	8	0	0	0	8	56	7.9	6	0.8			
Northamptonshire	8924457	Willford Meadows Comprehensive School	60	65	15	21	7	36.2	35.2	1.0	304	1	2		1	0			32	1	50	6	42	4	0	1	136	44.7	59	19.4			
Northamptonshire	8924458	Forest Comprehensive School	62	60	10	8	11	48.8	45.7	1.0	385	1	2		0	0			14	2	52	20	126	3	1	3	221	57.4	94	24.4			
Northamptonshire	8924460	The River Leen School (Fresh Start Alderman)	54	103	7	11	5	49.9	49.1	0.8	501	2	2		0	1			1	0	12	0	2	0	0	2	17	3.4	2	0.4			
Northamptonshire	8944408	The Phoenix School	32	98	26	17	9	38.8	28.3	8.6	513	3		2.0	1	0			0	0	0	2	2	0	0	18	22	4.3	8	1.6			
Northamptonshire	8944424	Madeley Court School	37	148	24	26	20	34.2	28.5	5.8	678	2	0		0	0			2	1	0	8	0	4	0	19	34	5.0	3	0.4			
Northamptonshire	8944425	The Lord Silkin School	30	132	30	13	21	30.2	24.6	5.6	698	3		2.0	0	0			10	2	4	7	2	0	0	5	30	4.3	6	0.9			
Northamptonshire	8944438	The Sutherland School	35	82	16	28	17	34.0	26.7	7.2	483	2	0		0	0			1	0	0	26	35	0	0	3	65	13.5	62	12.8			
Northamptonshire	9094001	Beacon Hill Community School	34	24	50	20	22	34.3	30.8	3.6	169	3			0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0			
Northamptonshire	9094200	Ethelton School	23	92	28	24	26	26.8	18.7	7.9	391	3			0	0			0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0			
Northamptonshire	9094304	The Alfred Barrow School	46	87	22	18	25	48.0	37.9	10.0	538	1	0	2.0	0	0			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0			
Northamptonshire	9094311	Southfield Technology College	35	144	32	20	26	33.0	28.8	4.2	810	3	Cluster		0	0			0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.2	2	0.2			
Northamptonshire	9164008	Oxstake Community School	23	119	30	23	19	50.9	43.3	7.6	713	3		2.0	0	0			14	1	3	4	2	7	0	23	54	7.6	17	2.4			
Northamptonshire	9164012	Barnwood Park High School for Girls	28	38	32	20	27	34.0	30.2	3.8	424	3			0	0			7	3	5	15	3	8	0	29	70	16.5	26	6.1			
Northamptonshire	9164015	Beaufort Community School	28	163	22	19	31	31.3	26.3	5.1	1,069	1	0	2.0	0	0			55	1	8	7	0	1	1	48	121	11.3	11	1.0			
Northamptonshire	9164039	Bekeley Vale Community School	11	41	39	25	35	33.1	27.1	6.0	266	3			0	0			1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.4	0	0.0			
Northamptonshire	9105428	Cheltenham Kingsmead	22	118	22	22	23	35.2	33.7	1.5	721	1	0		0	0			0	0	0	5	0	0	0	10	15	2.1	4	0.6			
Northamptonshire	9194029	Adeyfield School	15	109	20	22	28	33.1	29.8	3.3	644	1	0		0	0			7	0	0	2	29	1	1	9	49	7.6	27	4.2			
Northamptonshire	9194068	Barnwell School	13	100	24	27	35	30.2	27.3	3.0	741	2	0		0	0			0	0	3	4	0	3	1	8	19	2.6	0	0.0			
Northamptonshire	9194075	Francis Combe School and Community College	23	142	17	14	18	78.6	70.6	8.1	829	1	0		0	0			13	1	7	7	17	2	2	13	62	7.5	38	4.6			
Northamptonshire	9194087	Sir Frederic Osborn School	13	103	22	27	24	22.0	18.3	3.7	764	2	0		0	0			0	6	4	5	0	0	2	20	37	4.8	10	1.3			
Northamptonshire	919																																

**Appendix 3.2: Additional information relating to
schools facing challenging circumstances**

Turb/Stable	Ethnicity	Socio-econ	LEA Organ'n	Rural/Urban	SM / SW / LEA / SFCC	Effect / Ineff	Traject	Resources / Initiatives / In addition to SFCC
Stable	White	Low	Comp	Estate	L	Yes - now	Up	Attendance
Ltd	White	Mixed	Comp in selective syst	Overspill estates / small town	L	Fragile	Up	
Very	White	Low	Sec Mod	Coastal	L	Yes - now?	Up	Virtual EAZ
Stable ??	White?	Mixed	Sec Mod	Urban	SM	ditto	Up	FS Rev and Cap
Turb ish Attendance	Mixed sig Asian	Mixed	Sec Mod	Urban	SM	Temp, but effective	Up	
Turb ish Attendance	Mixed sig Asian	Mixed	Sec Mod	Urban	SM	Ineffective	Down	
	White ??	Low ??	Sec Mod	Small town	L	OK	Up	
	White ??	Low ??	Sec Mod	Coastal	L	OK	Up	
Turb	White ??	Low ??	Sec Mod	Coastal	L	Weak	Down	
Stable ish	White ??	Low ??	Sec Mod	Coastal	L	Good	Up	
Turb ish	White ??	Low ??	Sec Mod	Coastal	L	Getting better	Up	
Turb ish	White ??	Low ??	Sec Mod	Coastal	SM	Getting better	Up	
Stable	White ??	Low	Sec Mod	Coastal	L	Good	Up	
	White ??	Low ??	Sec Mod	Coastal	L	Weak	??	
	White ??	Low	Sec Mod	Coastal	L	One very weak	Up ??	
	White ??	Low	Sec Mod	Coastal	L		Up ??	
	White ??	Low	Sec Mod	Coastal	L		Up ??	
	White ??	Low	Sec Mod	Coastal	L	Weakish	Up	
	White ??	Low	Sec Mod	Coastal	L	Weakish	Level ish	EAZ
	White ??	Low	Sec Mod	Coastal	L			
Turb-ish	White ??	Low	Sec Mod		L SFCC	Weak	Ltd progress	
Stable ish	White	Low	Comp	Coastal - Port	Off SM	Strong	Up	
	White +	Low	Comp	Coastal - Port	SM	Improving	Slow progress	
Stable ish	Mixed	Low	Comp	Inner city	Of SM	Strong	Up	EiC
	Mixed	Low	Comp	Inner city	SM	Weak	Down	EiC
Stable ish	Mixed	Low	Comp	Urban	SFCC	Weak	Little progress	EiC
Stable	White +	Low	Comp	Inner city		Good	Up	EiC

	Mixed ??	Low	Comp	Inner city		OK	Up	
	White	Low	Comp	Inner city		Good	Up	
Stable	Mixed	Low	Comp	Estate		OK	Up	
	White	Low	Comp		Off SM	HT OK, but...	Little progress	
Stable	White	Low	Comp	Estate +		Strong	Up	
	Mixed ??	Low	Comp		Off SM	OK	Up	
	Mixed ??	Low	Comp	Urban	L	??	??	EiC
	Mixed ??	Low	Comp	Urban	SM	OK (white)	?? (aggressive)	EiC
Stable ish	Mixed ??	Low +	Comp	Urban		Good	Up ish	EiC
	One White,	Low	Comp	Urban / Estate		??	??	EiC
	one Asian,	Low	Comp	Urban / Estate		??	??	EiC
	one Mixed	Low	Comp	Urban / Estate		??	??	EiC
Stable ish	White +	Low	Comp	Estate	L	OK ??	Up ish?	
		Low	Comp		L			
Stable ish	White	Low	Comp	Estate	L SFCC	Weak	Down	
Stable ish	Mixed	Low	Sec Mod	Urban		Poor	Little progress	EiC
Stable ish	Asian	Low	Sec Mod	Urban		Weakish	Some progress	EiC
Stable ish	Mixed	Low	Comp	Urban	SW	Improving	Up	
Stable ish	Mixed	Low	Comp	Urban / Estate	SM	Good	Up	
Stable ish	Mixed	Low ??	Sec Mod	Urban		OK	Up ??	
Turb	White ish	Low	Comp, but	Urban	L	Weak	Little progress	
Stable ish	Asian	Low	Comp, but	Urban		Good	Up	
Turb	White	Low	Comp, but	Urban	Off SM	Good	Up	
Stable	White +	Low ??	Comp	Urban	L	Good	Up	
Turb +	White ??	Low ??	Sec Mod	Coastal	L	Improving	Up	
	White +	Low ??	Comp	Estate	L	OK	Little progress	
Stable	White +	Low ??	Comp	Estate	L SFCC	OK	Up	
Stable	White +	Mixed	Comp	Small town	L	OK	Little progress	
Stable	White	Mixed	Comp	Small town sink		OK	Up	
Turb + [Army]	White	Mixed	Comp	Rural	L	OK	Little progress	
Stable ish	White	Low ??	Comp	Urban / Estate	SM	Good, but...	Some progress	
Stable ish	White	Low	Sec Mod	Urban / Rural	SM	Weak	Limited progress	

Appendix 5.1: School Characteristics: Phase 1

Appendix 5.1: School characteristics (2001): Phase 1

School	Total pupils	% FSM	% SEN	% EAL	5+ A-C 1998	5+ A-C 1999	5+ A-C 2000	LEA organisation	Location	Culture ¹	Capacity ²
1	760	39	23	22	25	19	9	comprehensive	inner city	stuck survivalist	stuck
2	388	25	26	2	11	19	19	comprehensive	rural/ estate	struggling traditional	low/ medium
3	471	48	32	6	10	11	15	comprehensive	inner city	moving	low/ medium
4	519	56	31	5	5	17	25	comprehensive	estate/ inner city	moving	medium
5	905	69	34	73	18	19	15	comprehensive	inner city	struggling welfarist	stuck/ low
6	613	25	27	5	13	18	19	comprehensive upper school	urban/ rural	moving	medium
7	771	32	51	24	20	13	18	comprehensive	estate/ urban	moving traditional	medium
8	782	39	35	0	22	17	21	comprehensive	inner city estate	struggling	low
9	439	18	36	0	19	25	9	secondary modern	rural	moving hothouse	medium
10	357	30	33	0	12	15	17	secondary modern	urban	moving	low/ medium

¹ Culture as defined by Stoll and Fink (1996) and Hargreaves (1995). Cultures identified during field work in conjunction with school and DfES data.

² Capacity identified using management conditions survey and as above.

Appendix 5.2: Management Conditions Survey

THE MANAGEMENT CONDITIONS OF SCHOOL

RATING SCALE

Attached is a series of 24 statements about your school. We would like to know how far these statements match your own perception of the school, in other words, your personal view of it. There are no 'right' answers, we are seeking your opinion.

Please indicate in the boxes provided which statements reflect your personal view.

School:

Please indicate your present post:

Support Staff	
Permanent Teacher	
Temporary Teacher	
Middle Management Team	
Senior Management Team	

ENQUIRY/REFLECTION				
1.1	In this school we talk about the quality of our teaching.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
1.2	As a school we review the progress of changes we introduce.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
1.3	Teachers make time to review their classroom practice.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
1.4	The school takes care over issues of confidentiality.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
PLANNING				
2.1	Our long-term aims are reflected in the school's plans.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
2.2	In our school the process of planning is regarded as being more important than the written plan.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
2.3	Everyone is fully aware of the school's development priorities.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
2.4	In the school we review and modify our plans.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
INVOLVEMENT				
3.1	In this school we ask students for their views before we make major changes.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
3.2	This school takes parents' views into consideration when changes are made to the curriculum.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
3.3	Governors and staff work together to decide future directions for the school.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
3.4	We make effective use of outside support agencies (e.g. advisers and lecturers) in our development work.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS

STAFF DEVELOPMENT				
4.1	Professional learning is valued in this school.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
4.2	In devising school policies emphasis is placed on professional development.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
4.3	In this school the focus of staff development is on the classroom			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
4.4	The school's organisation provides time for staff development.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
CO-ORDINATION				
5.1	Staff taking on co-ordinating roles are skilful in working with colleagues.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
5.2	We get tasks done by working in teams.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
5.3	Staff are kept informed about key decisions.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
5.4	We share experiences about the improvement of classroom practice.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
LEADERSHIP				
6.1	Staff in the school have a clear vision of where we are going.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
6.2	Senior staff delegate difficult and challenging tasks.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
6.3	Senior management take a lead over development priorities.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS
6.4	Staff are given opportunities to take on leadership roles.			
	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	NEARLY ALWAYS

Appendix 5.3: Interview schedule: Phase 1

Interview schedule

Introduction

- Purpose of interview
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Opt-out
- Use of names for the tape
- Return of transcription for validation
- Structure

Leaders facing Challenging Circumstances

Theme 1: Personal perceptions and values

- i. What is your **motivation** for working in a SFCC?
- ii. What are your **expectations** of the leadership task facing the Headteacher (you) at this school? Has it changed over time?
- iii. What have been the **critical moments** in the Headteacher's (your) leadership of this school?
- iv. What professional **development opportunities** have you found most valuable and have any of these impacted on your role as a leader? (*prompt-internal vs. external*).
- v. In what areas of school improvement has (have) the Headteacher (you) had the most impact and the least **impact** and why? (*Ethos, culture, attendance, behaviour.*)
- vi. What **ambitions** do you have for the school/yourself?

Theme 2: Leadership style (same questions to all levels)

- i. In your view is there anything distinctive about the style of leadership **necessary to be successful** in SFCC?
- ii. What has **most influenced** your leadership style(s) and approach at this school?
- iii. How would you **describe** the Headteacher's (your) leadership style and how might others see it?
- iii. How far do you **delegate** leadership to others? (*prompt for classroom teachers LSAs/support staff, pupils*).
- iv. To what extent do you feel the Headteacher (you) has (have) a **realistic perception** of what life is like for other staff in the school? (*Headteacher: How do develop/maintain this?*)

Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances

Theme 3: School improvement, development and OfSTED.

- i. How do support and encourage **innovation** within your school?
- ii. Was the OfSTED inspection process a **positive experience** for you? (*Why?*)
- iii. Is the OfSTED inspection a **useful tool** for school improvement in a SFCC? (*Why/why not?*)
- ii. Did the OfSTED inspection **identify new areas** for school improvement that had not been previously recognised by the school? (*If so, what? How? If not, why?*)
- iii. Has the school **focused** on or prioritized any of the key issues identified by OfSTED? (*Why/why not?*)
- iv. To what extent have the OfSTED key issues been successfully translated in to changes in **practice within the school**? (*Want examples at appropriate level: whole school level/departmental level and classroom level?*)
- v. Has **your practice** changed as a result of the OfSTED inspection? (*Prompt: Management, leadership, administrative, teaching*) (*If not, why?*)
- vi. What, arising from the OfSTED inspection, has **most influenced you** to change your practice? (*Feedback-inspector, report, peers, management directive, policy change etc.*)
- vii. How would you like to see the work of the new NCSL support schools like yours? (*Research and Programmes/Support Mechanisms*)

Appendix 5.4: Example of field notes: Phase 1

School 5

ALL CORRESPONDANCE to XXXXXXXX or the home address of the new Headteacher

Currently a caring inner city welfarist comprehensive

900 on roll

E2L 761/900

FSM 69% LOW SES

Attendance <90%- holidays during term time

OfSTED Teaching 90% satisfactory or better (a good week?)

EIC- learning support centre

Pupil council, mentors prefects

Very well resourced- more money than they know how to spend!

High pupil mobility eg influx of refugee children/pupils move out of area country etc.

OfSTED Feb 2001 Headteacher seriously ill soon after with heart problems (has not returned). His leadership was felt to be good by OfSTED and classroom teachers, but less effective by SMT. His departure has created a leadership vacuum. There are major power struggles within SMT, to the extent of factions not speaking to each other. Middle managers recognise this. I get the impression that classroom teachers do also but are less prepared to acknowledge it to me. However they describe the school as drifting and needing cohesion since the head left and waiting for the new head to start in September.

The new head has had to be seconded in for two days a week to 'steady the ship'. However, mail is not reaching her and is directed to the old head. Micro-political shenanigans are rife. According to the incoming head his response to her appointment (she has a track record) was 'I'm surprised they appointed with such a weak field'. The culture of the school feels fragmented and balkanised within a climate where one-up-manship and back stabbing are common. The unifying message is 'we really care about the kids here' and I believe that they do. But is caring in a pastoral sense enough for these children?

The incoming head recognises the task facing her and is clear about what is needed to make progress.

Establishing and articulating a vision.

Building a coherent SMT- redefinition of roles etc. new blood if needed

Raising low expectations of staff

Getting pupils into school

General feeling at MM and SMT level OfSTED report far too positive should have been SW or SpM

Why? Possibilities offered by individuals

Political Clare Shorts constituency/election due/EIC school?

Of the record chat between SMT member and RgI suggesting a goodbye present to headteacher who was due to retire at the end of the year anyway after long service to the school.

Simple variation in OfSTED teams- was this team over understanding regarding context?

Appendix 5.5: Examples of transcriptions: Phase 1

School 4.

Head Teacher

5 years

INT So could you just tell... how long have you actually been in charge here then?

BS 4 ½ years.

INT And you've seen the school through the... through basically taking it out of special measures?

BS It wasn't in special measures.

INT In serious weaknesses?

BS Yeah, I've had three OFSTEDs and an HMI visit in the four years. We had an inspection first of all... I started the job in September 96, had an OFSTED in November of that year, it was okay, and then two years' later we had a dip in our [5(?)] A's to C's but the progress of the school was continuing, as we set off on progress... can I take you round and show you various things as we go along?

INT Yeah.

BS You see, here's 96, and in 98 we had this dip in results, now that particular result in itself prompted another inspection and so we had another inspection basically ### took out some of our players that we ### closer round that mark and I think had that been the case ### inspection coming ### support ### children. On that next inspection most schools I think under 10% had got special measures, and I was probably delighted for the first time in my life to have something serious rather than special, because special measures would have really damaged this school, because we were moving, we'd had a limited time together as a senior team, there was a lot of good practice in the school anyway, and the team made us serious weaknesses, but really we weren't... we weren't serious weaknesses which was confirmed when HMI came in the January just seven months

use
label 4

later and on the first visit looked at the five key issues and said, we don't need to come back here, and so we actually had one visit, but as a result of that you can't come out of serious weaknesses until you have another OFSTED, so we had an OFSTED last week, and here we are now, a good school.

INT So I've heard.

BS Has everybody told you? ### has I'm sure.

INT Yes, yes, people were smiling as I came in.

BS So that's the kind of history of the period of leadership that I've come through. I was at the school before, I was the Deputy and the Head had a stroke on his way to school and so I was temporary Head from the beginning of 1996 and he didn't recover sufficiently to come back to teaching, and nobody was more surprised than I was when I actually got the job as the Head Teacher, because I'd been the Deputy for about 15 years.

INT So you've taken the school through quite a number of events, but you think that, the exam results, that dip, has pushed you into the serious weaknesses, but really... are you saying that in terms of the school as a whole, apart from the exam results which you think were explainable that...

BS The school, we didn't feel had serious weaknesses, we thought the school had areas of development that we had a plan and we were developing them and the team that had inspected us felt that as well because they were very positive, but I don't think they could put a school with 5%... 5 A's to C's into ### category.

INT Can I ask you what your motivation is for working in a school like this one?

BS Yes, it's quite simple really, to give something back really because I grew up on a council estate with three brothers and sisters, didn't get any chance of an education and most of the kids I grew up with didn't, and there was an Australian Catholic Priest who moved into the Parish that was on my estate and I must have been about 9 at the time I think and he was appalled at the education the young people were getting who lived on the estate, and basically he went to

the rich and powerful Catholics in the town and said you are going to build a new school, this isn't good enough, he told me this years later, and he had the drive and the view to make it happen, and I went into that school not in the very first group but the second year that it opened, so we had uniforms, teachers expected a lot, and I remember going during the holiday periods and getting extra tuition with my mates at a teacher's houses, and we had to do their gardens in the morning, something in return, that we got some extra lessons in the afternoon. So there was a team of teachers there who were saying, Yeah, okay, social disadvantage is a factor, it's not an excuse, and what we've got to do is compensate for that social disadvantage, so of course I have a model back in the 60's where I grew up through a system where it's possible, so nobody... nobody could ever tell me even now that it's not possible because I think it's possible to turn any school round and to get youngsters performing. There's a lot of hard work to make it happen but I think it's possible anywhere and really that's my motivation, to give back what I... it's given me opportunities to go round the world and I wouldn't have been able to do that in the same way, it's given me the opportunity to do a job I really enjoy, and if I can be part of giving something back that was given to me then that's good fun, it's great fun.

INT What expectations did you have when you first came to the school of the leadership task?

BS It was easy really, I had to be Del Boy because I had to... one of my strengths is that I'm a bit of an entrepreneur really and at the Christmas dinner of picking up the school from the previous Head I'd asked the finance officer to check a few things out because I'd got a feeling there was some serious financial problems, no mismanagement of funds...

INT Just lack of them really.

BS Lack of... future planning really, and that was my ### something that I'm comfortable with dealing with it but there was £120,000 deficit that would grow at quite a serious rate which was to do with dropping numbers in the school and a few posts that had been taken on that in the short term were fundable but when you looked at the long term, they could actually be quite difficult. And so one of the key leadership tasks was to share that with the staff, to also share with the staff that an OFSTED was on its way in the November

because we knew well in advance that we were going to get this OFSTED inspection and the Head had had a stroke, I was very close to the Head Teacher and I knew from my visits that he might get back but it was going to be a very long time, so it wasn't a job that I could caretake, I'd really got to get the staff together, which I did for two teachers days and say, Look, we've got to deal with this together, there's a serious budget crisis here, we need to look at how we can prepare the school to get through this inspection that's going to be on the horizon. So there was the leadership in terms of pulling the team together and saying, Look, okay I'm not trying to get myself a job, but for the future of this school, we can't afford for this school to go down, and I think people were beginning to understand the seriousness of OFSTED and the serious budget crisis that I'm going to have to begin to deal with, and I want to reassure everybody ### that we are not... and I'd spoken to the Governors about this, we are not looking to move people out of the school but will look to reduce costs and when people get jobs we will replace those people and I will do anything I can to pull in extra monies, I mean that was the Del Boy bit really, because before I came here I was the [TV(?)] co-ordinator and I actually did a lot of work with businesses in the community so I'd had some experience of drawing financing, and I think Headship was becoming much more of a thing... a Head Teacher, because you don't separate being the Teacher but Chief Executive, you are almost the Board without the Board, you have to be able to juggle and spin plates and build up expertise in areas where maybe you haven't got it but you need to draw on all sorts of people who have. So the leadership... it's those two aspects I think. One is getting financing, building teams, risk taking, I think getting over to people that we are entering a period where teaching would no longer be jobs for life, and this increasing accountability, and really trying to get that over to people, and I think I could see that clearly before maybe others. The Headship was becoming more like being a football manager except there's no club to go to, if the Head doesn't survive the school, it's very difficult because special... I think there's very few Head Teachers in secondary who survive special measures, they do serious weakness hence... <laughs> I don't think they survive special measures. I can't think of one in this city anyway. So there's that survival instinct that's linked to your leadership, because... and probably that's clearer to the Head than anybody, because you do a lot of the background reading, you meet with people

who are going through the new cycles, OFSTED, and ### zero tolerance really.

INT Could you put your finger at any... I think you've touched on a few there, any critical moments that there have been in the leadership of the school?

BS Yeah, inspection two, when we got serious weaknesses and not special measures, that... I was probably delighted, as I say, to have something serious, because I knew that we wouldn't ### back, where special measures I knew I wouldn't be here, or... and I don't think I'd have fought really, because the pattern across the city is that the easiest thing with special measures is to take the Head out, to maybe pull in the finance that I desperately needed, but the Head wouldn't survive, so yeah, I was going to survive it ### We could do it, 5%, but... so that was absolutely critical. I think other critical moments have been key appointments, I introduced a system where we watch people teach when we interview and we have bought some excellent teachers into the school using that process and so we ask people to prepare the materials that they are going to use and then we do lesson observations on anybody who has an interview here. So they've been critical moments and I think other critical moments have been where, we've been... in an amicable way I've been able to negotiate with a number of people to move on from the school without having to go down incompetence, and of the people who've actually taken those paths I don't know of anybody that it's not been okay for them, so it's been okay for the school and if there's one thing that OFSTED possibly gave me it was a springboard to get people to address issues where they were the weakest links, sorry to use that phrase.

INT Yeah, I understand what you mean, it's given you that... if you like the authority or the reason for ### or giving them a bit of extra impetus.

BS The other critical moments I think have been [gaining the action zone(?)] which started really in January this year and not just the gaining of the action zone but the working together of all the Heads in the area to create a vision for this community and then appointing a co-ordinator rather than a director so that a vision has been agreed by all key players who in a sense have put their schools to one side and said, How can we educate this community? And shared their

tool for improvement

OFSTED reports, so there's been that empathy from the more middle class junior school in the community to the junior school that's got 60% mobility and people can see that targets are different but realistic and people can share and support each other, so that when our co-ordinator took up post in January there's been no dissent within the zone because people have seen that more finance has gone to one school rather than another, but we collectively formed the vision on quality information, and I think that's been critical for the future of this school in terms of this school marketing itself, because we are surrounded by eight first choice secondary schools, there's a map over there I don't know ### chose that, and because of the inner city schools going to the wall, and there's six gone now, one just went, just two weeks ago, and the children are migrating out from the centre of the City and they tend to be mainly Afro Caribbean, children of African Caribbean heritage whose parents felt let down by the inner city comprehensives and that's attaching no blame to those schools because ### resourced to do the job that they need to do. So the parents moved to the outer ring and of course the schools they get into in the outer ring are the schools that are in challenging circumstances because they don't [fill up(?)] Our children in the SATs results were in the bottom 5% of the country, so when the children come to us that's ### managing. So the zone I think may, as it progresses, because we were questioning our efforts in the community and the children and looked to what their priorities were and a lot is linked to out of hours learning, a lot is overcoming social disadvantage by having a family centre on the site where youngsters who go home to no IT, no books, nobody who really understands education, won't be disadvantaged by that because they can come to the family centre where somebody will help them, and they have an individualised programme that they are working on in school with an interim report that is constantly telling them how they are getting on which is ### So the zone is going to give us the opportunity to add in these other dimensions to overcome... really overcome in a very practical way social disadvantage. So there's a number of...

INT ...important things come together then?

SB Critical things. Yeah.

INT Can I ask you what professional development opportunities you have had that you think had a significant impact on your leadership?

SB I did a Masters Degree with the OU in 1991 and there was an element on leadership management. I also researched into industry and community links and I also researched into the impact of homework on classroom performance at Nottingham University. And that was really useful because it ### enabled me to take a helicopter view of what was going on, understand how to research things. So I think that's certainly one element. The fact that I've worked in 5 different schools I think is excellent professional development because I've worked with some outstanding people, and I look at some of the things I do and I say, Keith, Amjit, Rosemary... so many of those interactions with those people influence what I do. Some of my teachers at school even influence what I do and how I react now, and I'm sure possibly in your own case if you think back, who influenced you most at school, and what does that effect the things you do now? So certainly that. Head Teacher conferences in Birmingham I've found very useful, where you bring in people who are sharing national and international perspectives on what's going on, what's ###. Our staff conference that we had last July, and interactions with staff that constantly are giving professional develop opportunities. So a bit like the previous question really, it's lots of different things that are relevant. I operate on a problem solving approach so rather than always necessarily going to a course, if I hit something where I feel I need another dimension, I will look to see ### help me with that, and that may be within the school, or outside the school, it might not be a course, it might even be my next door neighbour because I actually live just 70 seconds from the school, so I live in the community, so that gives another challenge really, which some of those perceptions are really beginning to change the people [who were(?)] sharing with me four or five years ago.

INT In what areas do you think the Head Teacher can have most impact... of the school's development and improvement, do you think the Head Teacher can have the most impact and which the least?

BS Where can the Head have the most impact? I think morale, I think the Head's got to keep smiling and I think the Head's got to be very positive even when... I guess it's a bit like a

football manager in the relegation zone... go in and say, I don't know how I'm going to get out of this. I think it's... the vision is crucial, my own vision for the school which is a collective vision, there's lots of things that people have shared, and holding onto that and being very clear about what that vision is. And entrepreneurs... I heard of this recently from Neil [Making(?)] who is the chairman of [C###(?)] which I thought was quite good really, he said that entrepreneurs see opportunities, and entrepreneurs see obstacles as opportunities and I think you have to have that very positive view in order to keep the staff clear that we are getting there, and I think... I had cancer in my 20's so I had to kind of be very positive through that experience so I guess anything that hits me in education isn't really serious. So that's... I wouldn't wish it on anybody, but I think that in my own particular working life does make a difference because you understand what really... what something... is serious is actually about. I think being able to convey to the staff that we are actually, and that's been confirmed on this most recent inspection, that the children who are actually coming to this school are doing better than you would expect them to. And with the league tables and people going through all of that, and people from outside the institution saying, Look where you are, you are rubbish. And the children are feeling that as well, so my...the staff has to also ### the kids, to actually let the children understand that they are in a good school and to I guess influence some very powerful people from within the community, the extended community to come in and say that as well, and we do that in all sorts of ways, interviews in assembly where children interview people, like on Saturday morning TV, Geeson Stewart for instance who's on those pictures, she's the local MP and God Bless her, she came from... straight from the launch of the manifesto to a meeting with the OFSTED team last Wednesday when we brought 24 people together who had made a huge contribution to support me in what I'm doing, and with all of those people I've always taken the approach, what can I do for you, if anybody from business or the community comes in, the first question they get asked is, what can we do for you? Sometimes what can we... we'd like you all... Caribbean band at our school fete, all sorts of strange requests and then...so it's mutual, and that element of leadership maybe isn't as obvious to the staff but it begins to become more obvious as these people start to come in, and then you can then begin to talk to these people and say, do you realise the pressures that the teachers are under, do

you realise that you've got to be lobbying to increase resource, because it's not lazy teaching as such, it's who decides what you really need to run a school in terms of finance, and finance is crucial. You asked a second part didn't you?

INT Yeah, where is it most difficult to have an impact on development and improving?

BS It's on a scale really isn't it because sometimes you think you are least able and then you find out in a few months you are really... been able to ### something quite remarkable but you didn't even realise, and it can be ringing a member of staff who's been off for a month, taking them out for a curry, saying, what's the matter? Don't worry about... we are not going to get rid of you ### or whatever the pressure is, and sometimes it's a year later that you see the benefits, showing that care and attention to somebody who may have quit the job, who would be a massive loss to the system, but at the time you think, I'm not being effective at all, am I intruding? And then that person tells you 12 months later ### that phone call and bothering to show some care which has switched that person back on again. So there's lots of things that you do and you think you have no impact, but it's a very difficult... and sometimes you may think you've had a hell of an impact.

INT And you haven't.

BS So I think it's very important to explore how much impact you think you are having. I mean OFSTED obviously is one way of feeding back but, I tend to do student committee, and do... parents evenings for years I just asked two questions, I go round saying to parents what are we doing well, where can we improve, and that generates lots of things, that indicates to me ### lunchtimes with kids, I think we weren't impacting there at all, maybe because we weren't focusing on this 45 minutes that they have where the building is closed down to some extent, not fully closed down, there's a library and things like that, but we've got a youth centre which we've now opened up at lunchtime for years 10 and 11, and we are involved in what's called a young city institute project, and the priority for the kids is getting his lunchtimes, they wanted a little garden area out here with seats where they can actually sit down at lunchtime and talk to their friends rather than wandering around where there's no seats except

in the dining room. So maybe least impact has really been responding to how the children experience the school, and that's somewhere where I think ### dialogue we get into with the youngsters ### more and more ### and I'd add that to parents as well, that if the family really... the family centre gets going I guess impact with parents who have had a very bad school experience and where you can meet them on a neutral ground rather than coming into the building, because the family centre we would see as neutral ground, that we'd have an ownership of the community that isn't the school, and in fact the location where it's developing is away from the school, it's next to our college which is just ### so the family centre is here, right up here in the corner. So I think it... and of course, kids, what is it, 15% of their time they spend at school, so we can probably impact so much more if we can do things with the parents. College courses, we are Head of the Junior and Infant because we are on a site with senior, junior and infants, and the school was rationalised so we would have had a building that would have been empty which would have been vandalised, that would have given us another problem, and a staffing problem because we are a seven day site, need a care taking team, so we got some nice premises out of the rationalisation that we may have inherited another problem in that we need to close them at the weekends because we couldn't afford to staff it. So I guess there's a bit of the Del Boy again to go out and get an environmental service, social services, sell that building to people who would come into it, and the best sell we did was to the college where as the three Heads we said, we think we can help these kids better if we can help their parents, so we started three years ago with 15... just 15 parents doing a first aid course, and we've just enrolled 320 students with the first mum off the estate ### university ### September. The next development will be the one that could really impact I think, when that family centre opens up and we really get people coming in, building on their courses, building on their confidence. So yeah, kids, felt about on this one a bit but yeah, I think children and their views and how we can make what they know is going to improve the school happen, and their parents.

INT

Could I ask you whether you think there's any particular style of leadership that you think is necessary in... if you are going to be successful in a school like this one?

BS No, I think whatever the style you've got to be consistent, I think you've got to have a clear vision, I think the Head has got to be absolutely clear in a school like this where it's going, and that vision has got to be one that has been gathered from lots of people, it will have an element of what the Head believes to be right and my element is that you can overcome any social disadvantage that it's all those other elements that make it up, and then to be able to communicate it, and from what we heard last week and what we've heard recently we seem to be getting there. ###

SOUNDS LIKE TALKING AWAY FROM THE RECORDING EQUIPMENT

BS ...and it's taken time to get the infrastructure in place to make them happen, that they are really making a difference, and those are the things that are really making the difference. So it's that [colleagic(?)] style of getting lots of people involved, not just within the school but from outside the school and the students themselves, and the Head is building lots of teams and in order to do that I think you have to be highly organised, and people laugh and joke but I write everything down, and I have... a filofax doesn't work for me, I've folded pieces of paper with a schedule that I keep rescheduling, elements that I need to go with today in there, because the Head is a side man, and there is so many things coming at you and you can't afford not to get back to somebody because for that one person that you don't get back to that could have been somebody who led a major development in the school, but because you didn't get back to them you stopped it happening. So it's an enabler. Getting that pride and self esteem in everybody, which was seen at its best on Friday when I read out to them, good school, and as a leader I really fought for that, I got every single inspector on their own last week, because they meet in a room and they eventually decide if you are a good school or a satisfactory school. So I thought I'm going to lobby this to you, because I think we are a good school, [Satfield(?)] were a good school, and I guess it's so easy when you are doing inspection after inspection just to say, Oh well this is one at the bottom end again, there were serious weaknesses then... so we really fought for that, but they eventually told me we didn't have to fight too hard because we got 10 out of 12 for that, it's a good school. But I said to each and everyone of them for the next stage of the development of this school, that word is crucial because there are so many people who work on his site who live here, in this community, and to

them if we are satisfactory with eight schools around us that are first choice it's just going to be another label that we are not good enough, but if you say we are good that will make a huge difference. A) it's the perception those people take out, and part of my role has been breaking down stereotypes of people. It's a damned good school. How do staff feel? And I said even more importantly how do kids feel, because when you are at the bottom of society, and I remember this as a kid, when you are at the bottom of society and ### because it was a Catholic school there was a sprinkling of ### and to this day I can remember going a lad's house who was middle class, and I had a good family, good mum and dad, dad was ill most of his life but we were cared for, and I remember going to this house, and a very... a lad who became... was a very good friend and we was in the kitchen and I heard his mum in the kitchen say, I'm sure he's off the estate, don't leave anything valuable around, and I just thought, God, that's how they see us. And that, I think is true of lots of the children you have here and SATs make that even more damaging now because you've got a label on you at a very early age now. At secondary school they used to start in year 7 and at least you could start again, but kids like looking at the designer gear kids wear they ask you what your SATs are, so you know ### you're a 2, and they'll say, Oh my brother's a 3 and he's only 8, it's a real put down. And so to say to these kids, your school is good, when they are coming from a difficult background, there was... I told year 11 on Friday afternoon just before they went off on study leave, and there was a lad called [Romain(?)] there, African Caribbean ### who had put a lot of work in and including ### and I'll always remember it because he was on the back row and I said I'd got an application form for a job, I said, you always put the name of the school down, you can say, it was certified a good school by OFSTED in 2001 and Romain went, Yes, yeah. And you just see how much that meant to him, and I think we overlook that sometimes, how the kids actually feel about being in the school when they look down the league tables, when they know that the only income coming into their family is low anyway ###

INT No that's fine, that's fine. I think we'll move on quickly to the OFSTED sort of section. Would you say overall that the OFSTED process has been a positive experience?

BS Which one? You mean the whole process?

INT The whole business yes, the whole series of them that you've had, would you say overall that OFSTED is a positive thing?

BS Because I take this approach of an obstacle being an opportunity I've always said to the three team leaders that ### it's a cheap audit, and I've always seen it like that, always looked at it in that way, said right you can help us, I've got this vision, it's a collective vision... and really I'm quite challenging with them when they come in and I've got even more challenging with each OFSTED, so I think you've got to show as the Head you are really in control of what's happening in the school, and their first visit is an eight hour one, and interestingly enough used to be with a number of different people, but as they began to realise that the Head is a key figure in the school as they are in a business I had eight hours with him on this last one. So he was trying to find out I think what leadership styles, what visions, and everything like that. So again I would be challenging as I was of him and saying, Right, there's a lot of public money going into this, I really want to see what you are going to come out with at the end of the week and we planned our OFSTED's to perfection, there's been no complacency because it's serious, it's really really serious business, and I think this school and the children are part of that process, have performed absolutely brilliantly last week, but a lot of work had gone in to making that happen. Now I think without the OFSTED process we probably wouldn't be at the point we are at, it would have taken us longer because it does sharpen you up, and when a few members of staff have moved on and they've not had a good report on a previous inspection and lots of people are taking the school forward then I'm sure people who maybe felt about vulnerable and really put a lot more effort in, there's people I know who are absolutely delighted with how they performed last week and they've had to work really hard for that. So, yes, I mean for us it has been, but if you were to ask me nationally the destruction that it's left behind you, let me just show you this... one thing I do share with them ### and that's why [professional(?)] value's really important. Guide to national [conferences(?)], and to let them see our own context that we have created, and this came from a very recent ### on postcodes that I've commission with the LEA to get a real picture of the context [it has created(?)] it meant to show people how schools are managing within our family group, and was able to share their [out turn stagnants(?)] and saying, we against all the odds here, as a team are actually

Leadership
Challenging

Learning

Improvement

managing to make a difference, and that's it, because I was asked by the Government, this is three years ago now, what I thought of OFSTED, and I said I thought at the time that the system itself will ultimately [meet(?)] special measures because there would be so many schools at the bottom that would... I don't say challenging circumstances, that would eventually in this market driven model, there would be those who would go to the wall, and as soon as you'd run out of filling up surplus places in other schools you'd have a problem because there'd be a number of kids that you couldn't get in anywhere else, they'd be at the bottom of the heap and somehow you'd have to do something with those schools, but maybe you'd struggle to attract staff to them because those staff wouldn't want to be inspected every month and you would only attract them if you put huge sums of money in to get those people... they wouldn't mind the challenge but they'd need to be paid for it, and that seems to be happening.

INT Do you think that OFSTED has identified any new areas that weren't already known to the school?

BS No I don't think they identified anything that wasn't known but they put a sharper focus on areas that we knew needed to be improved which when you sent to ### apartments you could challenge with more authority. I think maybe what they did was accelerate and prioritise them, of things, because key issues and then inspection coming back and monitoring the progress that you've made does focus those priorities. And one that I think the last inspection focused was monitoring the evaluation that we needed really to be monitoring our departments much more closely, the heads of departments needed to be monitoring, we needed to have regular book reviews where we'd all sit down and look at what everybody else was doing. So I think there was certainly things like that, that... not that we were not aware of them but we had a pressure on us to make them a priority, because if we didn't we would end up in special measures I guess, which... if we didn't show that we'd deal with them.

sharper focus

INT Can I ask you then, this is a final question, have you got any suggestions for the way that the National College for school leadership can support schools like this one? It's going to be doing training and...

BS

When I... I thought for a long time when I look at OFSTED I don't think it's a good model to have people who come... I mean we've had three different teams of inspectors who've come into the school and contributed to the school but why can't they be the same people, why can't it be ### the model this time with the S4 which is a huge amount of work to take on, I think that is underestimated that the Head Teachers... and the number that have gone from this city ### I'm 47, if I was 55 at the moment I wonder if I would have had the energy to do what I've had to do this year, 20 thresholds, performance management... and all of the things that are coming down all have a place, but the sheer pace of them and the sheer time demands that they all require are huge so I think if the sener can get some sense into people trying to manage change, and having an understanding of the impact that that change has on the working practices of people and the resource implications, and I don't know how they'd do it but somehow we've got to reverse the decline in people wanting to come into this job, and as the internet opens up even more and people realise that their skills are so transferable to other things which seems to be a trend, I don't suppose it really matters how much advice we are offered if we haven't got people who are here to do their job, they... it's somehow got to lobby and get the conditions right in order to be able to then advise. I think a mentor for a Head is a great idea, I really think that would be a wonderful idea and I think essentially the leadership and management should pair up similar schools, maybe in different parts of the country and maybe get to know a bit about the Head so at least they maybe get on, and that they can spend some time together, can talk in confidence about where they've got to and can go and look at each other's school and look at what's new and what isn't new, pulling a few people who have taken early retirement, it maybe have some specialisms in certain...

Can't stand

END OF RECORDING

- DR Somebody who's, if you like a good barometer of the school, knows ###, got their finger on the pulse and knows ###. ###. We used to get regular reports ###. ###. That's not to say that we've lost the perfect bloke, in many ways here, when there was just the two of us, we used to sit and chew the cud for hours and hours and hours and I used to tell him ### this, that and the other, but he was the kind bloke, people knew he had a terrible memory but they accepted it, in him they accepted it and they reminded him ###. For 85, 90% of the time they knew they would get total support from him, total backup from him. He would put money where he felt ### in terms of curriculum development, opportunity ### staff to develop their interests and their talents and so on. So it's all down to a co-operative, hands on approach. ###. ###.
- INT Do you feel that the Head teacher had a realistic perception of what ###?
- DR That's virtually impossible isn't it? Sit down now ### being a teacher now is nothing like it was when I first started. ###. ###. Whilst I am quite sure that [ordinary?] teachers would say that they understand ###. Having an understanding of what ### at this school are up against ###. ###. ###. I'm not sure that they have got the energy or whatever it is to stay here for 13, 14, 15, 16 years. It would be trite for a Head teacher to stand up and say I know what ###. ###.
- LH The Head teacher's teaching is totally different because of the responsibility ### without ### we assume we're going to ### newly qualified ###.
- INT Moving on to the last section then, looking at the [improvement?] of OFSTED. Would you say overall that OFSTED has been a positive experience for this school? You certainly have touched on it several times during the course of this interview
- LH It was the most stressful, I have two kids, it was the most [dreadful?] time for me, and I do personally get very nervous. I found it the most stressful period I have ever had in my life was the lead up to it. Actually the actual week itself wasn't that bad I suppose, if you take everything into consideration but it takes tremendous amount, and I wonder how much damage it does peoples mental health later and their physical health, the actual process. Moving back from it there have been certain things that have come through

Dr. [unclear]

OFSTED I feel that have made us go towards a certain direction which I think have proven beneficial ### the one previous to the last one, we had a weakness in literacy so we looked at how to improve our literacy and we looked at different areas ###. Hopefully going to improve the children's literacy which will improve attainment as such, so there have been certain things ###. But I just wonder, how much improvement there is because there is a period of time which after OFSTED everybody just slumps and it takes a long time for people to pick themselves up again, and then there is a period before ### I've got to be honest the six weeks before OFSTED, even though they've given us six weeks, everything goes mad again. Six weeks of building up. I wonder that ### time just before OFSTED and just after OFSTED, for the children, the pupils themselves, how much in some way their education had been marred in a way because of all the things that were going on, certain things that people ###. There are certain positive things, it's interesting when you get your report and you go through, I'm amazed, by the last OFSTED team how within a week they manage to pick up all the positive things as well as the negative things, but they were all prepared to pick up the positive things more so in the last OFSTED than ever. And it was interesting to see, right, ###. There are certain things that they actually do, bring your attention ### that you perhaps would lost in the mire as you go ### year after year. I am concerned about how much it takes out of people, ### in the way that it's comes back to? How do they say it should not be a non-threatening exercise, it will always be for as far as many of us a very threatening exercise, and whatever reasons they give it will never justify, ### a real caring staff, the hard working staff who get themselves very uptight with it. ### don't want fail, ### all these things go through your mind, and in a school like this ### treading on a thin wire ### like for example our attendance ### tremendous amount to try and bring it up all the time, we've got our own School Attendance Officer, we've got our own School Liaison Officer who have all these different systems etc. and I was personally terrified that when OFSTED came they would look upon that as serious weakness and fail us, which I know they have done. ### It's 92% now. They were very fair about it, very fair. They put it down, not as a serious weakness ### cause for concern but I felt they were particularly fair and I do believe that team that you get ###.

Improvement

S/Worload

Pupil Learning

Change over

Workload

Variation

DR There are politics, and I don't think any member of staff or any professional would get to be, not [expected?] but observed to identify ### to do their job ###. What I think most people objected to, was the irregularity of the certain ### and the lack of time to address any ### method of improvement. How they can expect ###. I think there is a piece of research that said that a very high proportion of schools, which are inspected the results go down anyway, GCSE results go down anyway, now if you are a school that ### that is ###. 78 or 67 something like that where you are ### what was 5% six years ago then there is a time when ###. It's very difficult to get out of that stranglehold, ###, then the lower teens, then the upper teens then your straight into the twenties and you get ###. You've [dropped?] 1% so you're hovering around 21%, just above the twenties, trying to get to 25, you got to 25 ### challenging circumstances ### attendance up to 90% ### school with challenging circumstances and yet really we haven't had the opportunity to sit down and say right, what we really need to do over the next three years is... because you get part way through and low and behold OFSTED comes round again and everything changes all of the ### go against the wall. Schools like this are perpetually and consistently ###. And that means that certain things that you couldn't possibly look towards developing or improving, hedging your bets or following your instincts, you can't do it because the days of going out on a limb are ###. More and more regimented, ###. Staff are looking at that and saying there's no ###. And I think that would produce problems ### to look at the OFSTED report ### content ### very, very positive and very supportive and I always have for the most part ### supportive ### but we haven't had sufficient time to do what we want to do to actually get us out of that situation and to concentrate on teaching to the standards ###. It's a fair process ###.

*Start turning
OFSTED*

INT Just touching on some of things you just said there, ### previous questions, the attendance and exam results. How manageable are those problems assuming OFSTED are going to come in ###? Are they ### problems, will it go above 25 percent, will it go up to 90? Are you optimistic?

LH I am optimistic.

DR The one depends on the other.

INT Because of the size of the school.

LH

And it's also, if you look at our year 11's, attendance drops and it was made clear in our last OFSTED report, ### it's parental condoned, and it is parental condoned the majority of it. They don't truant on this estate, they're at home, Mum and Dad know but they cover up for them. And this was evident in documentation quite clearly. What we're doing, ### we feel that our arms are tied, how on earth are we, apart from looking at the curriculum and making it accessible to all children and we've done this particularly for next year, looked at that, sometimes it's ### year 10, form a pattern with year 11, so we make sure they've got the right [diet?] the right curriculum for them. Of course the Government are still saying they've got to do all these GCSE's ### 9 or 8, how are they going to manage so we look at GNVQ foundation courses ###. The intention is hopefully that before I go that you may get ### get it ### the Government will probably say it should be 95% or something, up to 90%, were 88 last year and it looks like ### 88.1% last week. I thought we were going to be 88% again this year. But we're moving this year 11 group out, our School Attendance Officer ### works from 2 o'clock till 6 and he does [first day?] calling as well, now he started 4 years ago when our present year 10 were year 7, we're looking to see a rise hopefully of 1% for next year which hopefully will show his ###. ###. We are hopeful, we are optimistic but we are realistic at the same time, it won't suddenly jump.

DR

The one thing that upsets me or annoys me really is that if you took a straw poll of all the people who [gone down?] to London, [West- End?] school ### school. People were disappointed that they didn't get more out of it ###. ###. There's been no feedback, or I haven't ### terms of, all right they've got these ###. But they did actually at one point ask us if we, as a school with challenging circumstances if there was anything that we felt could actually make some ### change ###. And we were actually asked to jot down one ### idea and one off the wall idea, now your not telling me out of [60 odd?] people there weren't some things that could possibly be shared ### consideration. And there was no feedback, ### a couple of good ideas ###. I think that when kids get to the age of 11 the family allowance should be stopped ###. Now that we've got computerised registration I think it should be [claimed?] retrospectively either fortnightly ### and it should be given on the [rate at which?] the pupils attend school. ### so that parents [use?] the money ###

school. Now ### around here ### massive effect, because we've got the example set by ###. [Sixth form?] people ### could move their ### they're in here like a shot, they can't afford ###. Now if you'd got that example, why not let's look at what the aspect of that would be ### you go to these junior schools there and you will see parents standing outside the school gates ### collecting their kids, this, that and the other and ### kids from here being collected, so the attendance of ### is far higher ### now the answer is that the parents are starting to get interested, they get part time jobs, ### I can go to school today ### you see a whole manner of things like that. I think there has got to be some ### intervention, if you like off the wall and I know for some it would be ### at the end of the day instead of saying you can't ### in education ###, particularly in areas like this. You can't turn back and say, well ### bad teaching or this, that and the other, you've got to say that we as a country have got to have a clear understanding of what you can do to ensure that children turn up for school and are regular attenders ###.

INT Thank you very much for those comments.

END OF RECORDING

MIDDLE MANAGERS

difficult for everybody else and I'm quite happy and I'm quite happy to go down that road but I do think that people need all the support first before you then say that, and I think people need an opportunity to change and to develop and to decide whether they want to stay here on a supportive basis, and if it's not working then it's not working.

- INT Have there been examples where the staff have let or ###
- JIM Not to my knowledge, not competency procedures.
- MOIRA No there's been no competency procedures in this school ever to my knowledge.
- JIM People have left though haven't they? But I mean some people have left haven't they?
- INT Did they jump or were they pushed or...?
- JIM No I think they've left because... they've not been pushed management wise I think they've left because it's not been a good experience for them.
- MOIRA Most of the people who've left over the past 16 years have been people who have taken early retirement because of the packages that were around sort of 10 years ago or whatever, and then quite a lot of people have left because they've been promoted, because they've honed their skills to that extent this school and they've gone and moved on. Yeah, but yeah, there are some people who've moved schools and moved on.
- INT ### If we move on to the... we've been talking about sort of leadership styles in particular and talking about the leadership, school improvement and OFSTED, I just wondered Jim whether the inspection process was a positive experience for you?
- JIM I always like to try and be positive with OFSTED because I think it's... I don't see the point in being negative about it. I think it was different for me this time around because it's the first time I've been OFSTED'd as a Head of Department as opposed to just a classroom teacher and I wasn't really prepared enough for that role, it only came about 12 weeks into being in the school, so it was a difficult time for it to happen, I wasn't really fully prepared for that role and I think that was a slightly negative thing for me, although I

learned from it and I will be better prepared next time, so you could argue it was a positive thing. I've got on particular axe to grind against OFSTED, the only thing that I felt this time as a Department Head was that I think that my Department was, not actually criticised, ### criticised, but the evidence base that they used is then extrapolated out to make sweeping statements, so someone will come in and they will say, I've looked at this, I've seen this, I've done this, and they've taken a snapshot and then they'll say, from that we now think this, and I think the evidence base that they make that statement on is flawed, yes it is true perhaps, some of it, maybe some of the time, but I mean for example I've got me own department, but my geographer was off sick for the inspection, my other geographer was an NQT in this place, six weeks? And the bloke came in and he basically saw a couple of lessons an NQT teach and he was critical of the Department, which, you know, I just think that his evidence base was flawed, he says, well I've looked at this, I've looked at that, I said, well fine but you've not seen the person in the department who is the key to it all, and I think that was flawed, I think some of the criticisms are quite valid and I'm quite happy to accept the criticisms but I think on the whole... I'm going to argue for long inspections now which seems a bit ironic doesn't it, perhaps I'm not. But I think some of the... yes, my point is, quickly, I think they extrapolate the evidence to make decisions which are not necessarily correct, and I think they make you do a lot of work because of that extrapolation [of evidence(?)].

Summary

MOIRA

Yes it was a positive experience for me personally and it was for my department because we came out of that OFSTED inspection very well. And it was a positive experience because the person who was inspecting the science department made it so because he wasn't confrontational, he was interested in what we were doing and he spoke to us as if we were human beings, he's a practising teacher himself so he knows the ups and downs of being a teacher and he's still in contact with it which is quite good, and yes it did as a Department but as a school as a whole, no, and certainly within the Department there was a feeling of well, yes, okay, we've done everything we could possibly do, everything we could possibly do, we've got good results, we've got good ### we've got good everything, but we are still going to be in serious weaknesses, with all the extra work and pressure that that's going to cause and yet we've done our bit so why are we still working? And there was a bit of that sort of

Summary

Laksh
5x4

downside to it ### But you do, but you do, and there's a certain...

INT Is it a fair judgment?

MOIRA Not in terms of the school here, serious weaknesses, no.

JIM I cannot understand how you can have a school, if the basic premise is classroom teaching, right, if a school has got 95%...

MOIRA 98!

JIM Sorry, 98% satisfactory or better lessons, how that...

MOIRA And 50% good or better.

JIM But the fact of this that 98% are satisfactory, how you can have a school you can say on one breath 95%... 98% of the teaching is satisfactory or above, this school is in serious weaknesses. It doesn't make sense.

MOIRA No, because staff at this school and Middle Managers at this school felt it was an extremely harsh and unfair judgment because the two key issues that made it possible, well that... no, three... the three key issues were attendance, there is very little more that Middle Managers and classroom teacher in this school can do about that.

INT Which OFSTED acknowledged didn't they?

MOIRA They did but they still used it against us, very little we can do and we are being let down by the EWA service and the authority. We are being let down by the authority I now believe that every firmly. The other this is that it is the exam results and SATs results because they are measured against national expectations and we don't start from the same point that other schools start from and I think that they should look at value added, because if they looked at value added we'd be one of the best schools in the county never mind the city, but we are never going to... I won't say never, it's very, very difficult for us to be measured fairly against national expectations because it's like comparing us to Nottingham High School. Yeah? And you can't compare the two institutions because they are just so terribly different, but they are. ### and the other one was the fact that there

labels

wasn't a stable senior management team because they'd got an acting Head and two Acting Deputies.

JIM And the school day.

MOIRA And the school day, but the school day was not so much of a factor as those three things and the general feeling amongst the staff in the school afterwards was, well, okay, yeah, but what do you want us to do about that? They are out of our control, they are out of our control to the extent where staff felt so strongly about that and the ### that the unit in the school put together a paper and presented it to the OFSTED inspector who hid behind the framework and said, my hands are tied.

INT Okay ### I take the point, and it's kind of moving on from that, is the OFSTED inspection a useful tool for school improvement in a school like this?

MOIRA There isn't a straight yes or no answer to that question because I think some of the things that they come in and say are quite useful and some of them are fair, and they are fair and you have to be big enough and stand up and say, Yeah, that's criticism and I'll accept that because it's true. But it's not fair in the sense that the base that they use, the information base that they work from is unfair because it's loaded before you start and the other thing that I don't think is fair is that they come in and make the judgments but then there's no development that arises from that from them, there's no support from that ### so you then have to put your own house in order and make your own development plans, and...

JIM They have a right to criticise but they don't have the responsibility to back that criticism up with development opportunities, skills...anyone can come in and say, That's not right, that's not right, and go away. It's the easiest job in the world, you've got all the rights and no responsibilities at all and you can inflict so much on people and I just think that it would be a much better system for schools like ours and certain other schools if you had a team that came in who were committed to... okay, if you'd got...

MOIRA Supportive professional development basically.

Handwritten note: No comments

Handwritten note: Important

JIM

If the team were committed to getting you out of special measures, right, and they say, We are coming in, we've got an ace geographer, he's going to come in and he's going to stay with you and he's going to do some team teaching, he's going to do some of this, he's going to do some of that, and he's going to do twilight sessions, he's going to bring you this scheme of work and this is going to be really good for you and I think this will be really good, okay it's more expensive etc. but it's not punitive, the fact that OFSTED is punitive is wrong, it should be supportive and they should have... they should have people there that are committed to saying, Yeah, that's wrong and this is how you put it right and I'm going to show you how you put it right and I'm going to support you to make sure you do put it right, rather than this sort of paper chase that you get which is neither here nor there, because the next OFSTED comes up and everyone looks back at what they've said before, we'll address that issue and then we'll go with it again.

Development

MOIRA

And the other thing I find really annoying as a Middle Manager of the successful Department in the school is that there are things that I want to do with the Department that they want to do that they would find valuable and useful to work on and we find that we are being held back because we've got to go through the action plan for the OFSTED, most of which we are already doing so we don't need to do it and we've then got ### school management plan and so on, and there are times when I feel that we are being held back.

*on Chodary
held back*

END OF TAPE

BL

SCHOOL 6
CLASS TEACHERS

I think he's actually quite astute in this. We're introducing a new GNVQ Leisure and Tourism, next year, foundation. The problem is there's no text books for it, Now what I've said to him was, Martin this is okay but, you've got the lowest ability kids doing this GCSE where a teacher has got no resources. You can bluff your way through a lesson, but you can't bluff your way through a years worth of lessons. We've got to have the right, and what he said was, okay, let's have a look what we can do. How about if I give you time off where you can actually go to other schools that are doing it, seeing what they're doing, what resources they've got, so then we can budget it and make sure that it does run properly. So I think that's good because he listens, he's taken it on and he hasn't just said, yes, I understand and then put it any way. He said, okay, we'll hold our judgement, we'll listen to what your findings are, we'll arrange for the pair of you that are teaching it to go out, so I think that's a good thing about him.

INT

If we move on to the third and final thing, looking at improvement development and OFSTED. I just wondered Jaqui whether the inspection process was a positive experience for you?

JT

For me personally it was a very positive experience because it was my first one. When I first joined here I was an NQT so I'd just missed the previous inspection. So yes because now I know more or less what to expect and also all were classed as good and that was encouraging basically, but as a whole school it came much too early. I think three years after the last inspection was very, very early. And I think also that they came in with a judgement already made.

INT

Is there anything you'd like to add Brendan?

BL

The feeling of OFSTED was that they were negative, the pre-OFSTED visit, right the way through. They looked at the statistics for attendance, they looked at our GCSE's compared to National average and said, right, and they ### it. Even my business studies, because we'd got a small school, you can have somehow set those kids or what they'll do is they'll guide the top kids to certain subjects. We just take it in turns basically, so that this year it happened to be Geography and History. Now what happens is they then go, Geography and History, your results compared to National average are this. Business Studies, National average 50%,

7%. Now what they failed to understand is, some of these had reading ages of ten and eleven, and then a little sentence saying, nearly all kids achieved based on prior readings. The main damage is done in that initial. That's why I said the negativity of it. What you're saying is, don't teach low ability kids because you'll get stuffed in an OFSTED inspection. And that's not what inspections are really for. It's saying are these kids really improving?

JT And Martin had only just taken over as Head, he hadn't had time to settle into the job before he had the inspection, and neither had the rest of the Senior Management Team.

INT Do you think that OFSTED's a useful tool for school improvement in a school like this?

BL I think you've got to have some sort of inspections. The last inspection before we had this one was done by the Local Authority Inspection Team. But they understood the nature of the area, they understood what they used this school for, the fact that we had to take all these kids that couldn't cope elsewhere and that they came here and they improved. But this recent one came in, no, no, the statistics are there, you're here, we can't put you as achieving and I just think that that, well I don't think it was any use at all, and in fact if you actually look at the number of staff who have now decided, right, we're out! And I think what you're going to end up creating "slum" schools that nobody will teach in and even when you've got good staff, and they say that 90% of lessons are good, the main damage has been done by things out of our control; attendance, it's partly parental, it's partly a social thing, it's partly everything, it's not just. I had one lad, they told me in my business studies, oh well you had one lad, this kid wasn't working. I said I know, he's fifteen, his girlfriend is just about to give birth, he's just been moved into a flat on his own, I think he's got other things on his mind. Some pupils are not motivated, and you just think, well at the end of the day, you've said, that's why. This person's just been kicked out of home and gone into care, that person there has got no book, no uniform. Pupils are unprepared. And I think, that's when you just think, well this is not the real world here, and they talk to you afterwards and say, it's not going to be negative here and that was good, that was, and when it comes out on paper.

LEA inspection

Slum

INT Was there a difference between the oral feedback or discrepancy between your feedback that you got and what was written down?

BL Oh yes. I said to the OFSTED, I hope you're not writing anything negative there about that class because the kids did actually try, they're not the brightest kids in the world, but they really do enjoy the lessons. Oh no, there's nothing negative here, but when you get to read it then, you think, hang on a minute, what's all this bit here? That's your positive, that little bit there, and people don't read that bit, they read the first bit. And what I felt was, I did GNVQ, I teach a lot of GNVQ most of my time in fact and we got excellent results, well above national average. They didn't come and see hardly any lessons and they made this, how great it was and how teaching was, and I think the judgement was based on results, it wasn't based on anything else.

Feedback

INT Do you want to add to that?

JT Yes, I'm the same really, when we had our [inspection?] session it was all very positive and yet in the report there was a couple of bits that aren't very positive at all. We were told they wouldn't go into the report, but they have done. And also we have as a staff we all disagreed with the judgement and Martin says that must have changed the outcome.

Feedback

INT The serious weaknesses thing?

JT Yes.

INT Did the inspection identify new areas of school improvement that hadn't previously been recognised by the school?

JT No.

BL We knew the attendance, the thing is our attendance had improved since the last inspection but it's the rate of. We new IT was a problem. We had people questioning, you haven't written in Internet access, you've seen your scheme of work, you weren't on the Internet. I said I can't produce a scheme of work when you... with something I can't use, because if I do, you then criticise me for not following, you're in a no-win situation...there were plans to put them in but we just weren't at that stage yet.

*Priorities
Re change*

INT To your knowledge, has the school focussed on or prioritised any of the key issues identified by OFSTED?

JT Well attendance has always been our main priority anyway and it always will be.

BL We focussed that well before OFSTED where we had competition between forms to try and get a team thing going, to get them in. We've had people coming in who're specifically designed to look at who's away, contact the parents, try and get them to work with kids, go on home visits. So, all of these were already in place. This wasn't something we had done as a result of OFSTED, this was something we had done ### and over a number of years we were implementing.

INT If we could move on and talk about your own personal practices. Has that changed as a result of the OFSTED Inspection? Is there anything you do differently because of OFSTED? Whether it be in the classroom or dealing with colleagues whatever.

JT No. I'm the same as I was before.

BL I don't think I've really changed in as much as, I think everybody who teaches, teaches to their own style. Obviously as a teacher you end up doing a lot more chasing of absentees than you would possibly before. If they weren't there fine, but we have this system now if pupils are away, an absence list comes round, and you then say, right this person is obviously just skiving this lesson, so you can then chase them up. I think that way you've had to change.

JT I think that...

BL That was put in before OFSTED.

INT I'm thinking about your own teaching practice, you said they came in and they verbally ###. Did you get any feedback afterwards from the inspectors that, yes that was really good, I liked that, if you did this you would have got excellent, or if you did that, whatever. Is there any tips, strategies that were fed back to you to improve?

JT There was only really one with regards to achievement in our situation ### which was the OFSTED team did not agree

with the Certificate of Education Achievement which we do quite a lot with our very, very low ability pupils, because we will not put them through the stress of doing a GCSE which is a very difficult exam anyway, they come out with a "G". So they didn't agree with that, however, we still maintain that it was better, the best way forwards for our pupils. But what we will do this year is instead of doing French, we will do German and Spanish as well, because between the departments we've got three languages. So, it's encouraging them to do another language, so in that way, yes we've changed. Hopefully for the better.

INT I was just wondering about your actual classroom processes in terms of how you deliver lessons?

JT No, that hasn't changed at all because I don't particularly agree with shouting at pupils anyway.

INT Was that suggested?

JT No, not at all. The way I deal with the pupils is how I feel because every group's different, because I know them. I'm not going to change my style because of that.

INT ### not necessarily style, let's take an example, writing learning objectives on the board. ###. Was there any feedback that has helped you improve your teaching?

BL They tell you things which in a way I suppose you would do anyway, you put your learning objectives up, you can say, right we've done this, we've achieved that, so you can actually see progression within the class. But also I think differentiating learning when you've got a wide range of pupils in a group. The last group I had, Business Studies have just done their exam, one pupil will have 87%, one had nought because he basically can't put a sentence together, he's from another country. You've got them in the same group. Now you've obviously got problems here, and the suggestions they made were what we would do anyway, where you could send them off to use the internet, what the pupil ###, keep them going, say right, look up and see what you can find out about this company or this particular area that you're doing, so that they're always being challenged, whilst you can also then spend more time with that lower end echelons and get them. So in that way, yes we knew that from the first OFSTED, I don't think it's anything new.

INT

So you're saying that they reminded you of things. Have you actually adapted what you do in your classrooms as a result of that reminder or have you continued as you were, or were you already doing it?

JT

I think it depends, I was always conscious of differentiation in the classroom anyway, to use that as an example, but in reality it's very difficult to always put it straight into practice when you've got so many pupils in the class and they're all at different levels. Yes it's certainly something that you strive to achieve even if you don't put it straight into practice.

END OF RECORDING

Appendix 5.6: Analysis Matrix: Phase 1

OfSTED and School Improvement in Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances

School: _____

key: x = theme identified
 q = suitable quote

[illegible]

OfSTED and School Improvement in Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances

School:

SCHOOL 7SPM -> DWT

key: x = theme identified
q = suitable quote

	Perceptions and attitudes towards the inspection process					Reactions and responses to inspection process					
	Tool for improvement I	Role of HMI HMI	Stress and workload SW	Changed over time C	Use of labels eg. special measures L	Changed non-teaching practice NT	Changed teaching practice T	Identified similar priorities for change S	Promotes reflection and R-D discussion	Reaction to feedback	Context theme
HT	x x x 14	x 17			x x x 6 12 15			x 14	x x		Advisors re Leadership (orthodoxy) 12
SMT	x 11	x x 11 12	x 12		x x x x 12	x x	13	x 13			orthodoxy 3 shift turnover 12
MM	x x x 6	x	x x x 8								Leadership turnover accountability 4, 6, 8
CT	x x- 7		(x) 9	(x)	x	x	x x-x-	x x x 9			Leadership 3

absence of post inspection support

School 6

OfSTED and School Improvement in Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances

School: SW - D

key: x = theme identified
q = suitable quote

	Perceptions and attitudes towards the inspection process					Reactions and responses to inspection process					
	Tool for improvement +ve exp.	Role of HMI	Stress and workload	Changed over time	Use of labels eg. special measures	Changed non-teaching practice	Changed teaching practice	Identified similar priorities for change	Promotes reflection and discussion	Reaction to feedback	Context theme
HT	1-		(X)		(X)	X		X			New model disagreement Kantbach 67
SMT			12 X		11 (X) (X) Note. 3 14	2 X		13 X			Analogy 3 Mother CPD 5 vari-hon in ins Self eval 15
MM	X+ X- 7					X X 9		X			Framework 6 external mte
CT	X -X 10		(X)		X		X- (X) 13, 14	X		X- 12	Budger analogy lea insp 11

WEEKS PRIOR
OFSTED NOTIFIK.

Appendix 5.7: Context themes: Phase 1

Appendix: 5.7 Context specific themes: Phase 1

In addition to highlighting a number of common themes across schools, data analysis also identified some perceptions and responses that appeared unique to one individual case or a limited number of cases. This has led to the development of a number of 'contextual themes' that appear important for individual schools, or indeed groups of teachers within individual schools. This appendix reports a number of these themes by comparing and contrasting them against context themes from different schools.

Middle managers interviewed at school 1 felt the outcome of their inspection was predetermined, while senior and middle managers in school 4 felt they could influence the inspection process. The Headteacher of school 4 spoke of 'gaming' and challenging decisions made by the team as important tactics in ensuring success. Senior managers in school 10 also highlighted the importance of 'gaming' and the preparation period therefore suggesting that school 10 felt they could influence inspection outcomes. Middle managers and senior managers in schools 3 and 7 felt that OfSTED was responsible for the creation of an orthodoxy pertaining to acceptable practice constructed within a narrow focus. Schools 7 and 8 were positive about the role of LEA advisors support during the process. Several schools highlighted the role of continuing professional development. Senior and middle managers in school 7 were concerned about the effects of the inspection process on staff turnover. Middle managers in school 10 felt the timing of the inspection was a key factor in determining success.

Summary of context themes

School 1 (SW into SpM)

Pre-determined outcome (MM p.3)

School 2 (out of SpM)

Variation in teams (SM1 p.10*)

Orthodoxy (MM p.5)

Self review (MM p.16-17)

Notice/preparation (MMp.17)

School 3 (identified SW)

LEA advisors (HT p. 14)

Rigor (SM p.1)

Variation (CT p. 14)

Validity/empathy (MM p.18)

Orthodoxy (MM p.21)

School 4 (out of SW)

Challenging the team (HT p. 15)

Gaming (HT p. 13)

Vulnerability (SM p. 5)

OfSTED+CPD (SM p. 15)

Variation (SM p.15)

School 5 (identified SW)

OfSTED positive outcome (p. 9)

School 6 (identified SW)

New model (HT p. 12)

Disagreement (HT p. 13)

CPD (SM p. 5)

Variation in teams (SM p.13)

Framework (MM p. 6)

LEA inspection (CT p. 11)

Staff turnover (CT p11)

School 7 (out of SpM)

+ve advisors (HT p.12)

Orthodoxy (SM p. 3)

Staff turnover (SM p. 12/MM p. 8)

Accountability (MM p.15)

School 8 (identified SW)

Variation in teams

(HT p.10/SM p.7)

Pupils learning (SM p. 7)

Vulnerability (SM p. 7)

Team building (CT p. 4)

LEA advisors (MM p. 10)

School 9 (out of SW)

Support networks (p. 14)

School 10 (out of SpM)

Preparation (SM1 p.9)

Gaming (SM1 p.9)

Quality of T&L/CPD (SM1 p.9)

Develop vs. Dismiss (SM2 p.8)

Rewards/motivation (MM1 p.10)

Timing of inspection (MM2 p.7)

Narrow focus (MM4 p.7)

Acceptance of young (CT2 p.7)

Key: SW= serious weakness
SpM= special measures

Appendix 5.8: Example of management conditions survey analysis

School 7			Senior Management	Middle Management	Permanent Teachers	Temporary Teachers	Support Staff	All
			2	19	19	3	1	44
Inquiry	1.1	In this school we talk about the quality of our teaching.	4.0	3.3	3.2	3.7	4.0	3.3
	1.2	As a school we review the progress of changes we introduce.	4.0	3.1	2.9	3.3	3.0	3.1
	1.3	Teachers make time to review their classroom practice.	4.0	2.8	3.3	3.7	3.0	3.1
	1.4	The school takes care over issues of confidentiality	3.5	3.5	3.6	4.0	3.0	3.5
Planning	2.1	Our long-term aims are reflected in the school's plans.	4.0	3.2	3.4	4.0	4.0	3.4
	2.2	In our school the process of planning is regarded as being more important than the written plan.	3.5	3.1	2.9	3.3	2.0	2.8
	2.3	Everyone is fully aware of the school's development priorities.	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.0	3.4
	2.4	In the school we review and modify our plans.	3.5	2.9	3.2	2.7	3.0	3.1
Involvement	3.1	In this school we ask students for their views before we make major changes.	2.0	1.8	2.2	1.3	1.0	1.9
	3.2	This school takes parents' views into consideration when changes are made to the curriculum.	1.5	1.9	2.2	1.7	2.0	2.0
	3.3	Governors and staff work together to decide future directions for the school.	3.5	2.5	2.9	2.7	3.0	2.7
	3.4	We make effective use of outside support agencies in our development work.	3.0	2.5	3.1	2.3	2.0	2.8
Staff Development	4.1	Professional learning is valued in this school.	4.0	2.8	3.2	4.0	3.0	3.1
	4.2	In devising school policies emphasis is placed on professional development.	4.0	2.6	3.2	3.0	3.0	2.9
	4.3	In this school the focus of staff development is on the classroom.	4.0	2.8	3.3	3.3	3.0	3.1
	4.4	The school's organisation provides time for staff development.	2.5	2.4	2.8	3.3	2.0	2.7
Co-ordination	5.1	Staff taking on co-ordinating roles are skilful in working with colleagues.	3.0	2.8	3.1	3.0	3.0	2.9
	5.2	We get tasks done by working in teams.	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
	5.3	Staff are kept informed about key decisions.	4.0	2.9	3.1	3.3	3.0	3.1
	5.4	We share experiences about the improvement of classroom practices.	4.0	2.7	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.0
Leadership	6.1	Staff in the school have a clear vision of where we are going.	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.0	2.0	3.1
	6.2	Senior staff delegate difficult and challenging tasks.	3.5	3.2	3.2	3.3	2.0	3.2
	6.3	Senior management take a lead over development priorities.	4.0	3.2	3.5	3.3	2.0	3.3
	6.4	Staff are given opportunities to take on leadership roles.	4.0	3.1	3.3	3.3	2.0	3.2

IQEA Management Conditions data for schools across projects.					
			Management	Teachers	Support Staff
			238	1079	236
Inquiry	1.1	In this school we talk about the quality of our teaching.	2.7	2.5	2.7
	1.2	As a school we review the progress of changes we introduce.	2.6	2.3	2.7
	1.3	Teachers make time to review their classroom practice.	2.2	2.2	2.4
	1.4	The school takes care over issues of confidentiality	3.5	3.2	3.4
Planning	2.1	Our long-term aims are reflected in the school's plans.	3.4	3.0	3.0
	2.2	In our school the process of planning is regarded as being more important than the written plan.	2.5	2.3	2.4
	2.3	Everyone is fully aware of the school's development priorities.	2.8	2.5	2.4
	2.4	In the school we review and modify our plans.	2.9	2.6	2.6
Involvement	3.1	In this school we ask students for their views before we make major changes.	1.8	1.7	1.9
	3.2	This school takes parents' views into consideration when changes are made to the curriculum.	1.9	1.9	2.1
	3.3	Governors and staff work together to decide future directions for the school.	2.6	2.1	2.9
	3.4	We make effective use of outside support agencies in our development work.	2.4	2.1	2.6
Staff Development	4.1	Professional learning is valued in this school.	3.0	2.6	3.0
	4.2	In devising school policies emphasis is placed on professional development.	2.7	2.2	2.6
	4.3	In this school the focus of staff development is on the classroom.	2.6	2.4	2.8
	4.4	The school's organisation provides time for staff development.	2.5	2.1	2.5
Co-ordination	5.1	Staff taking on co-ordinating roles are skilful in working with colleagues.	2.7	2.5	2.7
	5.2	We get tasks done by working in teams.	2.9	2.6	2.7
	5.3	Staff are kept informed about key decisions.	2.9	2.4	2.5
	5.4	We share experiences about the improvement of classroom practices.	2.3	2.2	2.4
Leadership	6.1	Staff in the school have a clear vision of where we are going.	2.6	2.3	2.4
	6.2	Senior staff delegate difficult and challenging tasks.	2.4	2.3	2.5
	6.3	Senior management take a lead over development priorities.	3.1	2.8	2.9
	6.4	Staff are given opportunities to take on leadership roles.	2.7	2.2	2.4
		Number of schools	28	28	25

Appendix 5.9: Management conditions survey commentary

Appendix 5.9: The management conditions survey commentary

This survey was requested to be administered to all teachers and support staff in all schools. Eight out of the ten schools involved in the research returned their surveys for analysis. Unfortunately, despite providing a self addressed envelopes and conducting numerous reminder telephone calls and letters schools 6 and 10 failed to return their completed surveys. The questionnaires returned from school 1 appeared not to have been completed anonymously or circulated to all staff. The reasons for schools 6 and 10 failing to return their surveys are less acute or clear. However, a 70% response rate is pleasing from SfCC. This survey has been administered on over 200 schools over a period of eight years. The national results suggest:

- Senior managers have a 'rosier' view of the management conditions in their school than other categories of staff. That is, they feel that behaviours generally occur more often than the teachers and support staff in their schools.
- Teachers are more critical of the management conditions than support staff, whose views are closer to those of managers.
- The 'involvement' condition is consistently the one with the lowest responses.

(Hopkins, 2000)

The results of the management conditions survey are presented below in coded chronological order by individual school.

School 1

There were nine responses from school 1 (1 temporary teacher, 2 permanent teachers, 3 middle managers and 3 senior managers). The returned questionnaires had initials marked on the top right corner. These had been covered over with tippex. This may have two important implications. First, the questionnaire was not distributed to all staff and second the teachers that completed it were not afforded the confidentiality or anonymity of response that this research had asked requested. This calls into question the reliability and validity of responses from school 1. Therefore, school 1 data was not analysed. School 1 was under high levels of pressure during this period. It had recently been placed on special measures (the first and only school in that particular unitary authority). On the day prior to the interviews a teacher had died in the corridor after an LEA lesson observation and feedback. Consequently, the interviews were rearranged for a later date. This may go some way to explain the behaviour of the individual or group that made the decision not to administer the questionnaire as requested.

School 2

In school two fifty percent of respondents deemed themselves as management. There was a high incidence of senior management (the Headteacher) 'outsourcing' middle management. Therefore senior management appeared to have a particularly rosy view of the school conditions. Middle management

ratings were comparable to those of permanent teachers (except for Involvement, where teachers score higher) and support staff rated involvement higher than all other groups (except the Headteacher). Middle management scores were generally higher than national management scores for Planning (Condition 2) and Involvement (Condition 3). Teachers scores were higher than those of their national counterparts for all conditions (except 2.2, which was the same). Support staff score higher than their national counterparts for each condition except 4.3, 5.1, 5.2 and 6.4 (where they score the same), and 4.4 (where they score marginally lower). The findings from this survey suggest that school two has a medium capacity for improvement and is probably a moving school. However, interview data and informal conversations suggested an undercurrent of dissatisfaction especially within middle managers suggesting at some levels this was a struggling school.

School 3

In school 3 over 50% of teachers considered themselves to be management. Senior managers rated co-ordination highest of the categories of staff. Senior management also scored higher than national management norms for all statements except 1.4 and 6.3, where they are lower. Middle management rated Inquiry (Condition 1), Involvement (Condition 3), Co-ordination and Leadership (Condition 6) higher than national management scores. Teachers' scores were higher than those of their national counterparts for all statements and support staff scored higher than their national counterparts for Involvement. All four groups of staff scored higher than their respective national norms for 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, Involvement, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 6.1 and 6.2 and they scored the same or higher for 2.4. The capacity for improvement in school two appears high. The

TEXT CUT OFF IN ORIGINAL THESIS

as for enquiry, involvement, co-ordination and leadership may have —
enced by its on-going relationship with the IQEA programme. School
moving school.

4

Senior management in school 4 rated all 24 behaviours higher than their
al counterparts. They also rated the conditions more highly than middle
gers except for 2.2 and 3.1. Support staff rated co-ordination more highly
teachers, who rated it higher than middle managers. Middle management
ed planning, co-ordination and leadership higher than the national norms. All
r groups rated all behaviours except 1.4, 2.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.4 and 6.2
sistently higher than national norms. Overall, staff in school 4 reported the
anagement conditions within their school as positive. Therefore, it is likely that
ie school has a high capacity for improvement. These findings support
ocumentary evidence and research observations that this is a moving school.

School 5

In school 5 there were high numbers of staff that considered themselves
management. There was a high incidence of middle management 'outscored'
management (16/24). Middle management scores were similar to those of
permanent teachers who consistently outscored the two temporary teachers.
Support staff generally outscored all the other groups. Senior management
scores were consistently lower than national management norms except for 5.1
and 6.3. Middle management scored lower than national management scores for

Inquiry, Planning, Staff Development, Co-ordination and Leadership. Teachers scored lower than their national counterparts for Planning, Co-ordination and Leadership and support staff scored lower than their national counterparts for Staff Development. Compared to national norms the conditions in school 5 were less positive. Therefore, the capacity for improvement in school 5 appears to be low. These findings also support documentary evidence and interview data suggesting that school five is at least a struggling school and may be on the cusp of becoming a sinking school.

School 7

In school 7 Senior Management outscored middle management for all behaviours except 1.4, 3.2 and 6.1. Permanent teachers rated involvement, staff development, co-ordination and leadership more highly than middle management. Temporary teachers scored similarly to permanent teachers, though they considered involvement to be lower. Senior management were more positive about the management conditions than their national counterparts except for 1.4, 3.2 and 4.4. Middle management rated leadership more highly than the national norms. Permanent teachers scored all 24 behaviours higher than the national norms. The support staff rate co-ordination higher and leadership lower than national norms. School 7 rated well when compared to national norms. The findings suggest that school seven is a moving school which has a medium capacity to improve further.

School 8

In school 8 senior management rated involvement and co-ordination more highly than middle management and teachers scored lower for inquiry than managers. Excluding the single temporary teacher, support staff scored highest of the groups for 1.4, 2.2, 2.4, 3.3, 3.4 and 4.1. Senior management scored co-ordination higher than the national norm. Middle management scored lower than national norms for every behaviour except 1.1 and 5.1. Teachers rated leadership higher than their national counterparts (Headteacher had been in post for less than one year). The support staff rated planning higher and co-ordination lower than the national norms. Governor involvement and classroom focused CPD were rated lower than national norms by all groups. The data suggests that school 8 is a struggling or possibly sinking school with low capacity to improve itself.

School 9

Senior Management (the head?) rated planning and co-ordination higher than middle management but middle management rated staff development higher than senior management. Teachers scored higher than middle and senior management only for 1.1, 4.3 and 6.3. Support Staff scored highest of all the four groups for 1.1, 1.2 1.4, 3.2, 3.3, 4.3 and 4.4. They scored lowest for 2.2, 4.2, 6.2 and 6.4. Senior management rated planning and co-ordination higher than their national counterparts. Middle management rated staff development, co-ordination and leadership higher than the national norms. Teachers rated

leadership higher, and involvement and co-ordination lower than the national norms. Support staff rated inquiry, planning and co-ordination higher than their national counterparts. All four groups scored 5.2, 6.1 and 6.4 higher than the national norms, and 3.3 lower. Survey results combined with other data suggest that school 9 is a moving school with medium capacity for improvement.

Commentary

The survey results from the management conditions survey highlight some key messages relating to the nature of these schools. The first important message from these findings is although these schools have been grouped as SfCC they appear to be very different in terms of their internal conditions. These data would suggest that SfCC are not a homogeneous group. These schools differ in the extent to which teachers consider involvement, planning, enquiry, co-ordination and leadership to be developed within their school. These differences are apparent within the SfCC involved with this research and also when compared to national norms. Therefore, these findings suggest that SfCC exhibit differential capacity for improvement and school cultures. These findings are particularly important as they may begin to explain some of the contextual elements of teachers' perceptions and reactions to external interventions. It would appear that some perceptions of intervention are common irrespective of context while others may be influenced or even determined by the context within which the teacher operates (see cross tabulation of survey results chapter eight, 8.6).

Appendix 5.10: Propositions: Phase 1

Appendix 5.10: Phase 1 propositions

Propositions

1. SMT perceive OfSTED as an effective tool for school improvement
2. SMT perceive the policies of labeling schools with special measures and serious weaknesses are unhelpful
3. The stress and workload generated by OfSTED is not justified by the contribution that OfSTED makes to school improvement
4. The pressure and workload created by OfSTED is causing teachers to leave SFCC for less challenging schools
5. Teachers perceive relationships with HMI as more positive than those with OfSTED inspectors
6. Changes in the inspection process have translated into changes in inspectors practice
7. The inspection process has improved over time
8. Being labeled as requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses is detrimental to the recovery of these schools
9. These labels demotivate and demoralise teachers working in these schools
10. Proactive and positive leadership is necessary to gain a successful OfSTED report
11. Preparation of staff for the process by the leadership team can improve inspection outcomes
12. OfSTED inspection changes non-teaching practices in schools more effectively than teaching practices
13. OfSTED inspection has difficulty in penetrating classroom processes
14. Schools have previously identified the key issues for improvement prior to the inspection
15. OfSTED inspection promotes reflection and discussion at SMT level in schools

16. Feedback to teachers is an important factor in persuading them to change their practice

Wider propositions

1. OfSTED inspection promotes quick fixes at the expense of longer term capacity building
2. Current policy of 'intervention in inverse proportion to success' is further destabilising our most vulnerable schools

For interventions to effectively generate improvement in all schools a more flexible model is needed. It must:

- Be sensitive to the school context
- Generate change at all levels
- Foster post-inspection relationships

Supporting direct quotations

Coding:

HT	headteacher
SM1, SM2 etc.	senior manger 1, senior manager 2 etc.
MM1, MM2 etc.	middle manager 1, middle manager 2 etc.
CT1, CT2 etc.	class teacher 1, class teacher 2 etc.
S1, S2 etc.	school 1, school 2 etc.

A) Perceptions and attitudes towards the inspection process

Tool for improvement (less positive perception as move down hierarchy)

Where you're in a school in challenging circumstances you've then got the official means by which to act. In some circumstances it's quite difficult to galvanise you're staff into action. Now if you need that tool, if you need that power, then it [OfSTED] gives you that... There is a focus on teaching and learning in OfSTED but the monitoring process for that is a too short time frame to actually allow for you to analyse the thing properly. (HT, S2)

I think that there is a need for it (inspection), yes. I think that it was far more useful for advisors and HMI to do rather than the OfSTED team that we got. (SM3, S2)

If you look at it in the most positive, it's a huge amount of detailed research that you can use as a school to take the place forward and raise attainment. (HT, S3)

Since there's no conversation and then it's hidden in the report which an edited bit arrives in our pigeon holes some time later. There's no way you can inflate upon that and then improve your practice. And so for that reason I don't think that it's positive. It certainly doesn't improve our teaching. (CT3, S3)

At the end of the week I had an hour and a half interview and we discussed that (how I could progress). And it was almost the opposite to what (CT3) was experiencing (CT2, S3)

I do not think that the school would be in the position that it is now without the pressure of OfSTED behind them... I thought that the whole process of special measures, I would not recommend it to anyone should have it, but in terms of the school it was probably more powerful than the recent OfSTED we had. (SM1, S7)

You can see the benefit for the school in the period leading up to it, all the preparation and obviously within the week you want the best performance within the school. I wonder about the sort of cost to that... because in the post OfSTED time you see just how draining it has been for the staff and pupils and I wonder whether it is actually the most effective way of examining a school. (CT2, S7)

It actually focuses on issues that need to be addressed in the school. To raise achievement of youngsters, and although it's shattering at the time you begin to get over that and as you move through a phase of development through OfSTED or special measures or whatever, you are getting that development process working and trying to move forward...the after effects of the OfSTED process focuses the school on its prime business which we've always said is the teaching and learning, the quality of staff, their expertise, their ability to teach and perform in the classroom. (HT, S10)

I thought there were an awful lot of issues, both good and bad that the OfSTED report hadn't even touched on here... it didn't focus very deeply on issues which affected the school. (MM2, S10)

Role of HMI (most frequently commented on by SMT)

I have absolutely no respect for OfSTED whatsoever. For HMI I have a great deal of respect. (SM1, S2)

We were lucky in that the HMI lead person, in that she was always seeking to be positive and seeking to find things that had got better and so this was encouraging. (HT, S7)

The two day HMI visits that lasted two years created turmoil but they got a much better feel for the school moving on through time but equally they kept up the impetus. (SM2, S7)

When you had HMI in the early days you had a lot more dialogue and you could discuss strategies and the way forward. With OfSTED it is a snapshot, you get a report and off they go. (HT, S8)

Stress and workload (important at all levels)

I do feel that senior management themselves are under quite a lot of pressure...they're communicating that to us and they're putting us under more pressure than necessary. They've got this HMI inspection coming up next week and they're throwing so much stuff at you that you can't get on with your normal teaching. (MM2, S1)

There are too many things going on at once and we're in danger of making a hash of a lot of things and a good job of none. (MM1, S1)

It was clearly identified as being maths and science here and yet everybody gets tarred with the same brush and that's a shame. And it takes the morale out of people. (MM3, S1)

It is very stressful there is no doubt about it, in the month leading up to the the OfSTED staff, rightly or wrongly feel under a great deal of pressure. (SM3, S3)

Other schools that are not in deprived areas, the OfSTED process, they don't have any trouble meeting all the criteria because of the pupils they have and maybe it isn't so stressful for them because they know they are going to pass, and I also feel that sometimes the process isn't quite so rigorous, I mean we've been inspected almost annually because we don't meet the criteria. (SM2, S3)

I think OfSTED creates a lot of stress and I've seen colleagues go under, under that stress and perhaps have had breakdowns, unable to cope, And that is a horrible thing to see especially [in] people you respect, people who are vastly more experienced than you, better teachers than you... in a way OfSTED is quite disruptive... we as teachers who are committed to work with difficult kids were basically being targeted for making that choice... (CT2, S4)

It was an incredibly non positive experience for a number of members of staff who found it hugely stressful, who felt the outcome less than positive and less than helpful overall I wouldn't say it was a positive experience for the school. (HT, S6)

It was most stressful...it was the most dreadful time for me, and I do personally get very nervous. I found it the most stressful period I've ever had in my life was the lead up to it. Actually, the actual week itself was not that bad I suppose, if you take everything into consideration but it takes an tremendous amount, and I

wonder how much damage it does to peoples mental health and their physical health, the actual process. (SM3, S8)

Process has changed over time (recognised by all levels)

OfSTED itself has changed, OfSTED has changed dramatically...the bottom line is that it is more user friendly...there's a dialogue and it's not a case of you are doing x,y and z wrongly, get on and sort it out, they're making suggestions and that's much more helpful...the staff are having immediate feedback at the end of the lesson and I think that that really boosted the staff to have that feedback. (SM1, S4)

The actual inspection itself was very different to the one we had in school previously. It seemed less cold, less icy. It seemed that people were more willing to make time to talk to you about things and discuss. There was more discussion where as before it was a case of arriving with a clipboard and writing things down and off they went. But this time there was a chance to discuss things and it was much better. (CT2, S6)

I found the second one better and the third one best of all because the rules had changed and they [the inspector] could speak to you at the end of the lesson and tell you what they thought and I found that very, very beneficial. (MM1, S8)

Use of labels (negative at all levels)

I complemented on her team and the way she conducted herself as a registered inspector in this school. She identified the key issues that are important to us. The disappointment was being in serious weaknesses. (HT, S3)

There was a feeling within the department that...we've got good results, we've got good everything but we are still going to be in serious weaknesses, with all the extra work and pressure that that's going to cause and we've done our bit so why are we still working? (MM1, S3)

In 98 we had a dip in results (to 9% 5+A-C), now that particular result prompted another inspection...most schools under 10% had got special measures, and I was probably delighted for the first time in my life to get something serious rather than special, because special measures would have really damaged this school, because we were moving, we'd had a limited time together as a senior team, there was a lot of good practice in the school anyway and the team made us serious weaknesses, but really we weren't... which was confirmed when HMI came in the January just seven months later and on the first visit...said we don't need to come back here. So we actually had one visit, but as a result of that you can't come out of serious weaknesses until you've had another OfSTED, so we had one last week and here we are now we are a good school. (HT, S4)*

It was unfortunate that the OfSTED inspection report had to be based on almost historical data ...instead of making judgements on the things that had been going on since I'd taken over... The OfSTED inspectors felt that that by giving me that

serious weakness label, this would be additional support for me. I disagreed, I still disagree because the impact that labels have for schools in challenging circumstances tend to be ones where you find yourselves in even more challenging circumstances because of a reduced public perception of your qualities. (HT, S6)

The coming out of special measures was important to us because it was a stage in our recovery that was positive. (HT, S7)

It's very upsetting, it's very taxing when you get dumped into those particular of categories but once you've been named and shamed as such you are going to do your very best to try and make improvements... the pace in which we do that has sometimes been seen by external agencies as slow. But working on the ground when you know the difficulties of our own individual institution and the ways in which you can actually move on, the rate of progress in a school like us you can't stand still, there's no period of relaxing. (HT, S10)

Importance of school leadership (recognised at all levels)

The school is led and guided and driven by the fact that he is an OfSTED inspector, he knows exactly what OfSTED want to see that's what he did when he came in, he set it up that way, ... (CT1, S2)

Your leadership style does vary according to circumstance... Once I'd got the outcome of the report and once it had said serious weaknesses. You knew that that you had to do certain things and do them quickly. That necessitated being a little more temporarily introspective, to do brain storming, to work with key high level personnel inside the school and the authority, to brain storm best practice before going to staff. But it would have been nice to involve the staff right from the outset and say lets talk about this, lets brainstorm together. I couldn't do that... I didn't think that was going to be a sound way forward so as I say, temporarily it was a bit, close the door and get on with it. (HT, S6)

I do not believe in the concept of the super head. I wish I did, you know. Because I would like to fill that role. I think that heads make an enormous difference in the way they do the job but not in those simplistic terms. (HT S7)

If an HMI condemn you as a bad teacher. The heavens will not fall in on you as a result of saying this. I think that that was very important in terms of keeping staff suitably relaxed and motivated, on the other hand it is very clear that a school that is on special measures that don't make improvements, there is the potential there for quite serious consequences. And I think that was necessary. I can not conceive that people did not see that the change was necessary. (SM1, H7)

When you are in special measures you do [what the lead HMI] says and whatever it takes it has to happen. So they are critical times for the head and he will do everything in his power to present this school in the best light. (MM1, S7)

Although the OfSTED itself is over, the pinnacle of the danger has gone, but it sort of drifts back down again after OfSTED and I think that almost the post OfSTED time is in many ways more critical because it is what the headteacher or the team do as a response to points raised by the OfSTED... It is very easy to rest and say that you've got through the OfSTED or you have got through special measures, but what do the management team do next or what do all of us do next. (CT1, S7)

B) Reactions and responses to inspection process

Changes to non-teaching practice

I didn't do a vast amount of lesson observations... It is now my role to be in the classroom observing one lesson a week minimum. (SM1, S1)

It was recognised in the OfSTED report that I was a good planner but I've now realised (after feedback from the Rgl) that you have to be more focused with action plans... (HT, S3)

[OfSTED has changed practice in this school]. Not necessarily as a result of inspection but because you knew the inspection process was taking, going to be taking place. The practices actually began before the inspection. (SM2, S4)

About six weeks before OfSTED came in we suddenly found that we'd got to write twelve plus policies for the school because they hadn't been done between the first and second OfSTED. (MM3, S8)

The OfSTED made us ensure that the practice matched the policies, you can write any policy you want can't you, but unless people are actually doing it [improvements will not occur]. (SM2, S10)

Changes to teaching practice

There is nothing really that I am doing different now from what I was doing before. (CT1, S7)

I continue to teach the same way and OfSTED has not made any difference to that. I've taught the same way after the last three OfSTEDs. (CT3, S7)

A lot of classrooms aren't particularly different because you have to teach in that way to get any kind of respect and results from the kids anyway, but its probably the paperwork side of it that has been improved and we are probably where we should be as far as getting all our policies and things in to line. (CT2, S10)

I did myself a little check list after OfSTED had been, things that they said were good and things that they said I needed to work on... although they were very happy with my lessons there were things that I could improve and I hope that I've tried to do that. (CT1 S10)

OfSTED identified the same priorities for change as identified schools

Very similar issues were being spoken of when I first joined the team were identical, pretty well to the issue3s that cropped up from the OfSTED inspection. The changes hadn't taken place quickly enough for their liking (SM1, S1)

I think that a head that said that said that he or she did not know the outcome or what to expect from an OfSTED inspection shouldn't be in post. What it does is confirm or strengthen your view of the school. (HT, S2)

We all know the areas of weakness, and we need resources, ideas etc. to help remedy them. (MM2, S6)

There were not any shocks though [inspection findings] because it focuses what you already know. (CT2, S7)

Promotes reflection and discussion

I think that S4 is a good document. The questions that they ask and that probably had more effect on us than the actual inspection. The inspection did not come up with too much...I would not dismiss S4 as a minor thing... when we discussed it [SMT] we were totally honest, no audience, nothing. (HT, S7)

Reaction to feedback

(Inspection is a useful tool for SFCC) but it depends on how the information is fed back and used within the school. (MM2, S2)

When we had our [feedback] session it was all very positive and yet in the report it was not very positive at all. We were told that they would not go in to the report but they have done. (CT1, S6)

I felt that it was very good to have that objective feedback, and it was over a group of lessons as well, so top, middle and bottom a whole kind of range really (CT1, S8)

Appendix 5.11: School Characteristics: Phase 2

Appendix 5.11: School characteristics (2001): Phase 2

School	Total pupils	% FSM	% SEN	% EAL	5+ A-C 1998	5+ A-C 1999	5+ A-C 2000	LEA organisation	Location	Culture	Capacity
A	1324	32	37	39	19	16	20	comprehensive	London	struggling survivalist	low/ stuck
B	597	45	55	2	10	7	3	secondary modern	coastal urban	struggling survivalist	low/ stuck
C	1402	36	39	8	15	17	18	comprehensive	urban	cruising welfarist	medium
D	739	30	25	0	25	20	20	comprehensive	coastal inner city	moving hothouse	medium
E	428	11	28	0	28	20	14	comprehensive	Rural	cruising welfarist	low
F	1156	26	14	23	29	23	23	comprehensive	inner city	moving hothouse	medium
G	1743	7	38	2	23	19	17	secondary modern	coastal urban	struggling survivalist	low
H	652	30	54	22	18	21	27	secondary modern	urban	stuck survivalist	low/ stuck
I	585	18	32	6	9	20	15	comprehensive	urban	moving welfarist	medium
J	468	16	40	2	21	9	14	secondary modern	urban/ rural	stuck survivalist	low/ stuck
H	299	31	32	0	21	13	21	secondary modern	coastal rural	moving hothouse	medium

Appendix 5.12: Interview schedule: Phase 2

INPUT RECEIVED FROM THE INITIATIVE

1. Briefly, can you describe what you know about the SfCC initiative?

seminars

literature

pilot schemes (twinning)

2. What resource input has your school had from the initiative?

3. What materials has the SfCC initiative provided your school with?

Have you seen them?

Have you used them?

How have they influenced your practice?

4. Has the initiative provided your school with extra personnel?

How have they been used?

How have they contributed to improving the school?

5. Has the school received/generated any new ideas from being part of the initiative?

Received ideas

Generated ideas

EFFECTS OF THE INITIATIVE ON YOUR SCHOOL

- 1. Can you describe any positive effects that the initiative has had on the school?**

Did the initiative influence planning (SIP, SDP or RAP)

(If so, which elements of the initiative?)

Action (new policies, practices, risk taking)

- 2. Can you describe any negative effects that the initiative had on the school?**

Time, competition (Overload), consistency in classrooms

OFSTED INTERVENTION

1. Have OfSTED inspections contributed to improvement efforts in your school?

HOW?

What if any, aspect(s) of your practice have you changed as a result of inspection?

2. Can you think of any negative aspects of the inspection process?
3. How do you think that OfSTED inspections could be improved to provide more effective support for improvement in SfCC

LEA CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

1. Since the start of the pilot what support for improvement have you received from the LEA.

Has it been linked to the RAP or initiative in any way?

2. How often do you meet with an LEA advisor?
3. Ideally, what support would you like specifically from the LEA?

WHAT FURTHER IS NEEDED?

1. What has worked well?

How could it be improved?

What would you add to the initiative?

Why?

2. What has not worked well?

How could it be improved?

What would you remove from the initiative?

Why?

How could the initiative help to reduce your workload?

Can you think of any way that the initiative could help to reduce staff turnover?

FINAL THOUGHTS: What is it that makes this school so challenging?

1. Conditions within the school?

Can influence

Can't influence

3. Conditions beyond the school?

Can influence

Can't influence

Appendix 5.13: Example of interview notes: Phase 2

VARIABLE PRINT QUALITY IN THE
ORIGINAL THESIS

TEXT ALSO CLOSE TO THE EDGE OF THE
PAGE

INPUT RECEIVED FROM THE INITIATIVE

1. Briefly, can you describe what you know about the SfCC initiative?

seminars

literature

pilot schemes (twinning)

2. What resource input has your school had from the initiative?

Sum of money - 70K.

FCG → LEA of STED consult. per week. → Private audit on STED criteria.
 → on-going development Post week - 1 day per month on-going.

3. What materials has the SfCC initiative provided your school with?

Have you seen them?

Have you used them?

How have they influenced your practice?

validation process in purchasing equipment.
 not consumables.

4. Has the initiative provided your school with extra personnel?

20 + 3 £ 20,547.

How have they been used?

recruitment incentives 1st year.
 £100 per month off stud loan
 200 per year term if fulfill DTES criteria.
 20 unannounced or overseas trained
 → SA, Canada, Australia,
 140

How have they contributed to improving the school?

5. Has the school received/generated any new ideas from being part of the initiative?

Received ideas

Generated ideas

LEA

Getting basics right

CPD

→

subject leaders twilight 2
 T+L " 12

Data analysis - like for like.

EFFECTS OF THE INITIATIVE ON YOUR SCHOOL

1. Can you describe any positive effects that the initiative has had on the school?

- 9 NATs to start July for induction. → Payed for July/Aug.
- resources effect in depts → Maths. (25% KS4 lesson Advisor, resources → rejuvenated depts (~90% non Sats) → second in maths.
- ICT dysfunctional structures - networking - rooms
- scribes → independent learning ↑

Did the initiative influence planning (SIP, SDP or RAP)

(If so, which elements of the initiative?)

RAP integral to SDP.

Action (new policies, practices, risk taking)

'not hold on extra' sustainability.

quality of teachers

2. Can you describe any negative effects that the initiative had on the school?

Time, competition (Overload), consistency in classrooms

70K in school £4.95m not enough.

→ related size. 6% girls → funding

'twinning sites' — greenacre 0% — 40% boys → no funding

14K school achievement award

Is challenging times vs achievement

→ time related 'low attainment funds'

→

OFSTED INTERVENTION

1. Have OfSTED inspections contributed to improvement efforts in your school?

- monitoring visit last year. (Pre Sept)
- operation upgrade A+35%
- HOW? → not targeted sufficiently eg all kids all lessons during Easter
- use of data. A → C grammar
- C-D koanders where make a diff.
- coursework.

What if any, aspect(s) of your practice have you changed as a result of inspection?

- OfSTED validated RAP but school did not deliver on going monitoring.
- no follow up visit / question

2. Can you think of any negative aspects of the inspection process?

→ no anxiety / stress.

→ HMI

3. How do you think that OfSTED inspections could be improved to provide more effective support for improvement in SfCC

on-going support

- ① Validate RAP + start
- ② termly visits to support progress.

LEA CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

1. Since the start of the pilot what support for improvement have you received from the LEA.

→ LEA pot
↳ audit
↳ resources
↳ consultancy
↳ CPD
↳ ongoing support.

Has it been linked to the RAP or initiative in any way?

YES. → linked to RAP/SDP targets

2. How often do you meet with an LEA advisor?

regularly - almost daily

3. Ideally, what support would you like specifically from the LEA?

↳ lack of full range of subject specialists
↳ lack expertise 'instantly' available.

WHAT FURTHER IS NEEDED?

1. What has worked well? 70K.
→ teacher recruitment.

How could it be improved?

— reallocation to size
—

What would you add to the initiative?

Time limit per school.
Why? → lack of accountability
→ bid for the grant 'raising attainment'

2. What has not worked well?
OFSTED intervention.

How could it be improved?

→ no visits

What would you remove from the initiative?

Why? →

How could the initiative help to reduce your workload?

Can you think of any way that the initiative could help to reduce staff turnover?

resources
(if leaving quality teachers pay bonus to those staying)

via

gender balance

blend not right.

→ need new NAT's

Next

→ early 30's MM x5

1 from Medway

→ NAT's Sept

x9

local
R

applicants

FINAL THOUGHTS: What is it that makes this school so challenging?

1. Conditions within the school? *bilateral*

Can influence

quality of teaching
parental support + attendance 73%
↑ owner occupancy ↓ FSM. CAT test 53% A-C
low expectations / differentiation

Can't influence

→ Weak Middlemanagement → CPD

3. Conditions beyond the school?

Can influence

3 can't speak adequate English *SA*
— Nig

Supportive of improvement.
→ 5 vacancies → filled for Sept.

≈ 20% 'missing' staff

Can't influence

rev. 4 yrs. ... terminally ill. → fraudulent.

VP

HT since Sept → secondment end of 2002.

→ 6 miles from

1 x DH2

↳ Plans for post,

advertised + read last Fri.

1750 boys.

↳ asked to stay

not accept

7-10 yrs plan

→ Poss 4 more years dependent on strength of kids

26-27 March interview.

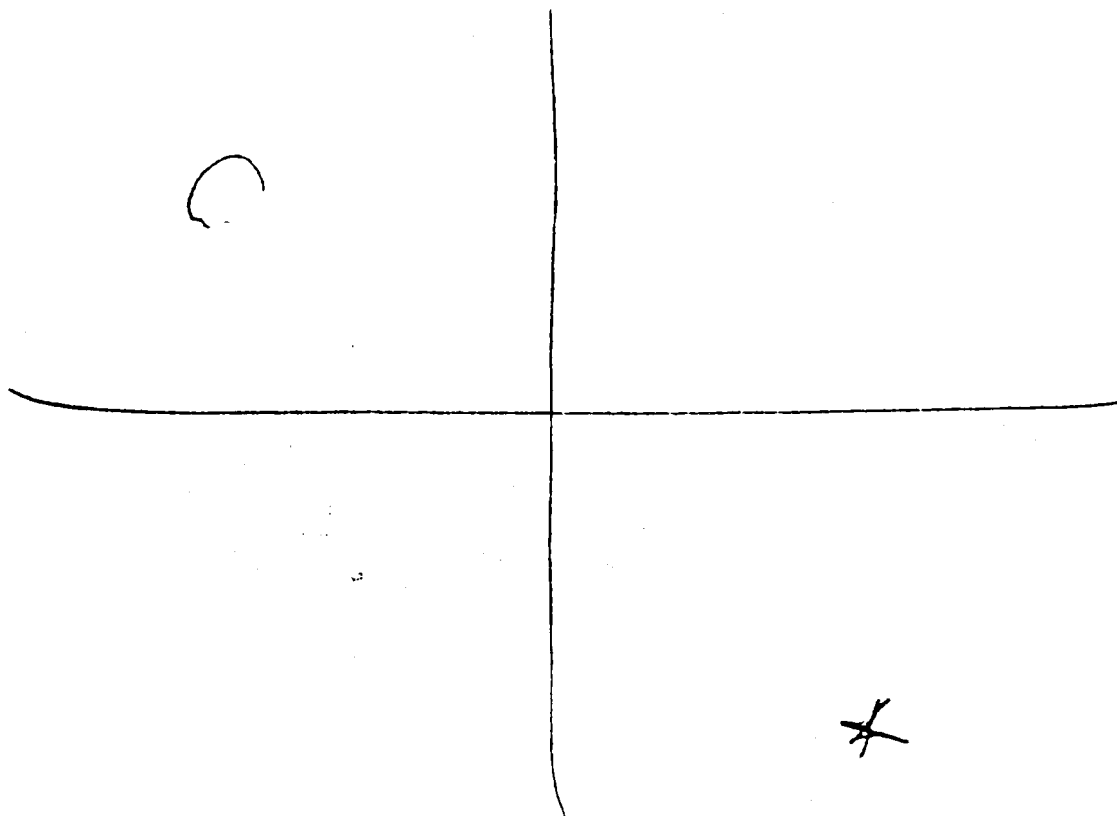
→ intro time this term

→ 1 day per week support role.

History of insular thought.

*

*



INPUT RECEIVED FROM THE INITIATIVE

1. ☒ Briefly, can you describe what you know about the SfCC initiative?

seminars

literature

pilot schemes (twinning)

twinning + partnerships

→ Lincolnshire

2. What resource input has your school had from the initiative?

G → 100K . 70K + 30K.

2 → 3 yrs

3. What materials has the SfCC initiative provided your school with?

Laptop for head?

Have you seen them?

Have you used them?

How have they influenced your practice?

4. Has the initiative provided your school with extra personnel?

SEN. staff.

How have they been used?

indirectly partner staff.

How have they contributed to improving the school?

5. Has the school received/generated any new ideas from being part of the initiative?

Received ideas

Generated ideas

collaborative work with GS.

↳ ^{G87} multicultural ^{Y8} technology whole day joint with GS.

*Y10 JS GS SPS. → out and bound
→ party*

EFFECTS OF THE INITIATIVE ON YOUR SCHOOL

1. Can you describe any positive effects that the initiative has had on the school?

G- All money spent with agreement both heads
→ Tech.

S- Synthesis - boosted staff confidence
- true learning environment
- range of strats.

→ relationships. → on-going, all staff → pupils governors.

Did the initiative influence planning (SIP, SDP or RAP)

(If so, which elements of the initiative?)

Action (new policies, practices, risk taking)

Both, strats not only suit. hiding from strats.

ideas sharing of practice.

2. Can you describe any negative effects that the initiative had on the school?

Time, competition (Overload), consistency in classrooms

No

OFSTED INTERVENTION

1. Have OfSTED inspections contributed to improvement efforts in your school?

Key issues → revisit
→ not constraining

HOW?

What if any, aspect(s) of your practice have you changed as a result of inspection?

2. Can you think of any negative aspects of the inspection process?

stress and workload,
no 'notice'

make schsc jump through hoops
eg. handbook - 'living document'

3. How do you think that OfSTED inspections could be improved to provide more effective support for improvement in SfCC

→ self review
→ on-going

LEA CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

1. Since the start of the pilot what support for improvement have you received from the LEA.

huge level of support
interest in partnership
opportunity to share practice
celebrated.

Has it been linked to the RAP or initiative in any way?

link inspector monitors progress
(not sp.)

2. How often do you meet with an LEA advisor?

6+ x per year
+ phone

3. Ideally, what support would you like specifically from the LEA?

~~support~~

WHAT FURTHER IS NEEDED?

1. What has worked well?

Partnership ^{bigger picture}
Sharing of expertise - confidence / achievement
out → learning environment / floor
in ← display
How could it be improved?

What would you add to the initiative?

long term priority

Why?

planning capacity building

2. What has not worked well?

constraints — vs pressure on examiners
philosophical — JS holistic
tension
How could it be improved?
negotiation = compromise

What would you remove from the initiative?

Why?

How could the initiative help to reduce your workload?

Can you think of any way that the initiative could help to reduce staff turnover?

FINAL THOUGHTS: What is it that makes this school so challenging?

1. Conditions within the school?

Can influence

- R+K specialist staff. - 1
- departmental variation. - 3
- behaviour consistency - 2

Can't influence

- condoned absence - 4
- External agent - Ed pay support. -

3. Conditions beyond the school?

Can influence

- post 16 - finance.

Can't influence

- Grammar
- Community
- EM drift
- low expect
- value of ed.

INPUT RECEIVED FROM THE INITIATIVE

1. Briefly, can you describe what you know about the SfCC initiative?

seminars
literature
pilot schemes (twinning)

2. What resource input has your school had from the initiative?

50 K. (+20 from EA2)
30 → EMPLOY. EA2
20 → RAP.

3. What materials has the SfCC initiative provided your school with?

→ no
→ T+L styles mats.

Have you seen them?

Have you used them?

How have they influenced your practice?

4. Has the initiative provided your school with extra personnel?

→ 1.5 SMT SfCC

How have they been used?

Annie - Emotional intelligence facilitator

How have they contributed to improving the school?

→ displacement of others
→ new ideas
→

5. Has the school received/generated any new ideas from being part of the initiative?

→ contacts outside TEC KCC
→ new staff raising expectations.

Received ideas

Generated ideas

EFFECTS OF THE INITIATIVE ON YOUR SCHOOL

1. Can you describe any positive effects that the initiative has had on the school?

12

- emotional int. small grp orange room
- girls attain / esteem, film, hand, practical.
- using non-teaching in novel ways
- stuff inset learning styles, → next revision Y10 + Y11.

esteem
wld → uni.

Did the initiative influence planning (SIP, SDP or RAP)

(If so, which elements of the initiative?)

Action (new policies, practices, risk taking)

→ imp teaching knowledge + expertise → reskilling

→ independent learning

Focus on Y10 + Y11
→ (City Acad?)

→ no development plan school future

→ Lib
→ risk take
→ ICT

2. Can you describe any negative effects that the initiative had on the school?

Time, competition (Overload), consistency in classrooms

Goldfish bowl.

→ pressure of time

label.

• over researched,

+ LSE, →

+ Canterbury →

• Press

relationship between community & press.

OFSTED INTERVENTION *monitoring*

1. Have OfSTED ~~inspections~~ contributed to improvement efforts in your school?

Supportive

HOW?

Very positive experience

What if any, aspect(s) of your practice have you changed as a result of inspection?

2. Can you think of any negative aspects of the inspection process?

3. How do you think that ~~OfSTED~~ inspections could be improved to provide more effective support for improvement in SfCC

→ 2 x weeks.

→ 1.5 day visit

→ Same inspector on visits

→ recent experience in schools,

LEA CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

1. Since the start of the pilot what support for improvement have you received from the LEA.

→ no support. —

RAP → county → questions + suggestions

ICAServ. → limited support.

HGS → EAZ

chous → 30K → EAZ

20K → County

improved relationships

RSTCC → 'critical support'

Has it been linked to the RAP or initiative in any way?

2. How often do you meet with an LEA advisor?

meet as needed
at your initiation

3. Ideally, what support would you like specifically from the LEA?

on call rather imposed
'urgent' response

county response slow

subject advisors — more
quality variable

WHAT FURTHER IS NEEDED?

1. What has worked well?
- initiatives quality of people
 - resources 10T - Lib open till 6pm

How could it be improved?

What would you add to the initiative?

- Money for fabric - no fences.
- right off deficit when appointing head/secondment.

Why?

2. What has not worked well?

- allocation of money decided before given
 - slow progress in terms of exam results.
- How could it be improved?
- Shifting popu. 10% of Y11 don't
 - turbulent popu. → looked after children
 - refugees (30 took 10)

What would you ~~remove from the initiative?~~

Why? baseline starting points → Kent highly compl.

How could the initiative help to reduce your workload?

Can you think of any way that the initiative could help to reduce staff turnover?

FINAL THOUGHTS: What is it that makes this school so challenging?

on arrival

1. Conditions within the school?

Can influence

- deficit budget
- staff turnover / absence
- pupil behaviour
- carrying low expectation
- low skill levels middle / senior manager
- baby sitting teaching rep. control rather than T+L.

Can't influence

no USP / Point

→ open competition.

3. Conditions beyond the school?

Can influence

Can't influence

Ask March 2000 → Sept in post.

2 yr Fixed term cont.

→

1 yr of stasis — At/HT DH from local grammar

— Janet & Fuhric

→ HT + 2 DH — Ian McQuinn

o +

erosion of power

→ EAZ → multiple intelligence.

Feb — implementing.

Physical clean up.

ICT provision.

quality assurance

no teach

→ moving from fire fighting →

↑

→ response

— structural change HOF → LSA → admin

→ to free up SMT time

→ improve T+L → lots of exclusion in Term 1.
→ response to

→ talk to children

→ community role

→ All SMT → gone (-1)

→ LGA support. → no competency just threats.
→ pressure

→ MM →

→ many staff to Montgomery.

→ No formal SMT meetings

→ Grammar curriculum

→ groupings of phantoms

INPUT RECEIVED FROM THE INITIATIVE

1. Briefly, can you describe what you know about the SfCC initiative?

seminars

literature

pilot schemes (twinning)

2. What resource input has your school had from the initiative?

3. What materials has the SfCC initiative provided your school with?

→ Learning zone

Have you seen them?

→ Curric → ICT.

Have you used them?

→ MM/INSET.

How have they influenced your practice?

4. Has the initiative provided your school with extra personnel?

→ ICT - GTR training teacher → B/Lk Spn.

How have they been used?

How have they contributed to improving the school?

5. Has the school received/generated any new ideas from being part of the initiative?

Received ideas

Generated ideas

EFFECTS OF THE INITIATIVE ON YOUR SCHOOL

1. Can you describe any positive effects that the initiative has had on the school?

- Projection in Teachers - all depts.
- 'Fast + reliable' → less time problem solving!
- Flexibility + structure of lessons
- increased internet use
- 'wider net' → becoming linked to Subjectore
- resource area
- 'specialist' ICT - FT hardware background/software dev. → technical
- Pupil's
 - 2/3 timetable + cover
 - regular teacher
 - subject recognition
 - targets short term
- Did the initiative influence planning (SIP, SDP or RAP)?
 - more time, weighted to lower sets. → differentiation
 - TF resources developed esp. differentiation
 - appropriate website links reading age.
 - reinforcement of activities.

(If so, which elements of the initiative?)

Action (new policies, practices, risk taking)

- Formalised GW

- Now by
- 1 week per month
 - wk shop 'drop in'
 - review after Easter
 - ICT literate → Teaching challenge

2. Can you describe any negative effects that the initiative had on the school?

Time, competition (Overload), consistency in classrooms

- Spending on hardware → 'cultural change'
-

OFSTED INTERVENTION

1. Have OfSTED inspections contributed to improvement efforts in your school?

HOW?

What if any, aspect(s) of your practice have you changed as a result of inspection?

2. Can you think of any negative aspects of the inspection process?
3. How do you think that OfSTED inspections could be improved to provide more effective support for improvement in SfCC

LEA CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

1. Since the start of the pilot what support for improvement have you received from the LEA.

→ (Numeracy + Lit INSET KS3 start)
↳ 12th
↳ subject specific vocab

Has it been linked to the RAP or initiative in any way?

2. How often do you meet with an LEA advisor?

Not this term (in post in Jan)

3. Ideally, what support would you like specifically from the LEA?

→ guidance of meeting nat ctds.
→ networking good practice.
→

q. 25 min

WHAT FURTHER IS NEEDED?

1. What has worked well?

- ~~little and often approach~~ ^{quality of pupil work}
filtering down to pupils

How could it be improved?

→ Central gov deals on resources.
Software licencing

What would you add to the initiative?

little + " " →

Why?

→ short term approach → buying hardware
obsolescence

2. What has not worked well?

organisation of GNVQ curric
→ all intermediate should be settled.

How could it be improved?

→ more targeted intervention for pupils or fringes
more software.

What would you remove from the initiative?

Why?

How could the initiative help to reduce your workload?

Can you think of any way that the initiative could help to reduce staff turnover?

FINAL THOUGHTS: What is it that makes this school so challenging?

1. Conditions within the school?

Can influence

- strong relationships
 - variation in T+L
 - consistency in policy application
 - comms → 'meetings'
 - → discussion reflection
 - → low expectations + committed
 - → differentiation
- Can't influence
- lack of formal

the home school

3. Conditions beyond the school?

Can influence

Can't influence

pupil turbulence

pupil cliques

lack of long term commitment to sch, comms,

INPUT RECEIVED FROM THE INITIATIVE

1. Briefly, can you describe what you know about the SfCC initiative?

seminars
literature
pilot schemes (twinning)

2. What resource input has your school had from the initiative?

3. What materials has the SfCC initiative provided your school with? *'Ad classes.*
• Able students - expectations
• low achievers - university trips. science
confidence, team work, parkland
or activities, team work

Have you seen them?

Have you used them?

How have they influenced your practice?

4. Has the initiative provided your school with extra personnel?

How have they been used?

How have they contributed to improving the school?

5. Has the school received/generated any new ideas from being part of the initiative?

Received ideas

Generated ideas

EFFECTS OF THE INITIATIVE ON YOUR SCHOOL

1. Can you describe any positive effects that the initiative has had on the school?

Banding — recognition home + sch at pp end
 — early recognition
 — achievement culture
 Behaviour → identified, monitoring — ^{HOY + tutor} home-school relations
 'Pupil progress' → work for own level. 'tightend up'
 * ^{one progress} → 1/2 / term

Did the initiative influence planning (SIP, SDP or RAP)

(If so, which elements of the initiative?)

Action (new policies, practices, risk taking)

→ LEA.

→ practical classroom support

- ideas on T+L coursework
- peer — son leadership
- Tech
- analyse data spread sheets.
- weekly 1/2 term.

2. Can you describe any negative effects that the initiative had on the school?

Time, competition (Overload), consistency in classrooms

→ ~~number~~ praise followed by points for progress

~~OFSTED~~ ^{4/21/11} INTERVENTION

1. Have OfSTED inspections contributed to improvement efforts in your school?

validation of efforts → one staff morale

HOW?

What if any, aspect(s) of your practice have you changed as a result of inspection?

☒ No

2. Can you think of any negative aspects of the inspection process?

3. How do you think that OfSTED inspections could be improved to provide more effective support for improvement in SfCC

LEA CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

1. Since the start of the pilot what support for improvement have you received from the LEA.

high profile. ~~so~~ beneficial but condescending/patronistic
- have changed elements of practice as result of on-going relationship
- sow guidelines

Has it been linked to the RAP or initiative in any way?

Yes visits
courses.

2. How often do you meet with an LEA advisor?

regularly weekly → 'ad hoc'

3. Ideally, what support would you like specifically from the LEA?

more LEA observations → progress review
on-going 1/2 termly obs. to get a realistic
judgement of teaching.

WHAT FURTHER IS NEEDED?

1. What has worked well?

- KS3 sow 'coursework monitoring'
- 'classroom practice.' 'external perspective' picture of wider world.

How could it be improved?

What would you add to the initiative?

Why?

2. What has not worked well?

- paper
- 'unrealistic'

How could it be improved?

What would you remove from the initiative?

Why?

How could the initiative help to reduce your workload?

Can you think of any way that the initiative could help to reduce staff turnover?

FINAL THOUGHTS: What is it that makes this school so challenging?

1. Conditions within the school?

Can influence

more one feedback 'valued'
variation in qual of T&L.

consistent policy

raising expectations → reliant on teachers support.

Can't influence

'transforming culture'

3. Conditions beyond the school?

Can influence

3rd gen unemployed low expectations, -ve
culture no education

Can't influence

Appendix 5.14: Propositions: Phase 2

Appendix 5.14: Phase 2 propositions

General

- Purpose of intervention not always clear
- Use of language and definitions by DfES condescending
- Roles and responsibilities of DfES/ schools not clear
- Short term intervention lacking coherence and strategic view
- External expertise not ubiquitous and not used effectively where available
- Reliance on a dependency model controlled from the centre. This inhibits capacity building

Use of resource varies depending on school context including:

capacity for change

school culture

effectiveness of leadership (understanding of improvement process)

Planning

- Tone of communication communication
- Time frame inhibits medium and longer-term planning
- Support for planning cycles varied

Monitoring and evaluating external interventions

- Cumbersome use of HMI inspection procedures
- Need to develop individual protocols for each intervention
- Training and support for inspectors needed
- Use alternative modes of M&E rather than using inspectorate for a purpose that they have become de-skilled at.

Role of LEA in external interventions

- Role in individual interventions clarified
- Variation in ability of LEAs to support schools

Reflections on phase two visits

Leadership and Management

- Sound in these schools now. However, recent pathology of poor leadership and management.
- Not as distributed as needs to be especially in most challenging
- Evidence of succession planning for when fixed term contracts end is negligible
- Entry and exit strategies poor with little external support
- Improving but still weak middle management

External support

- History of neglect from LEAs in selective authorities- lack of commitment to improving these schools- Now improved
- HMI monitoring visits accepted and useful

Teaching and learning

- Power and control vs learning
- Still wide variation in quality
- Basic re-skilling STILL needed despite efforts made in INSET (transfer of INSET to practice)
- Didactic teacher led teaching using bookwork to maintain control
- Unimaginative lessons
- Examples of comfortable collaboration between staff and groups Low challenging in return for acceptable behaviour
- Pupils in control? Uniform/ behaviour policies not applied consistently in lessons eg. Chewing, Walkman on, coats, hats scarfs etc. It appears that many teachers would rather teach in these conditions rather than apply policy consistently by challenging pupils standards of conduct which may lead to confrontation/ loss of learning time.

Context

Staff perceive SES to be lower than it is (ie FSM higher than they are in reality) and SEN to be higher than it is.- does this contribute to low expectations?

Irrespective of geographical location challenging schools tend to exhibit some similar characteristics. However, there is a wide variation in the factors causing them.

Common characteristics of SfCCs:

- Turbulent internal recent history
- Poor levels of resources
- Poor fabric of accommodation
- Wide variation within, but overall low level of collective staff competency
Therefore T&L is limited.
- Low staff and pupil expectations
- Turbulent staff and pupil population
- High levels of low level disruption within lessons,
- Volatile relationships pupil-pupil, pupil-staff and sometimes staff-staff
- Competition from other schools
- Selective authorities increase competition therefore promote the formation of sink schools.

SfCC Other points

RAP formulated by HTs rather than in collaboration with staff

Is SfCC appropriate for schools in SpM? (Extra pressure workload)

Will small towns (eg. Banbury) always have a sink school? Changing fortunes of neighboring schools

27/04/02

Appendix 5.15: Questionnaire: Phase 3

'External intervention for school improvement in schools facing challenging circumstances survey'

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to administer this important survey. This survey forms an integral part of our on-going work supporting school improvement in challenging contexts. The results will also contribute our growing knowledge base in this important field. All responses will be anonymised and confidentiality of response is guaranteed. The research team will feed school level analysis back to individual schools if desired.

Administration

We would be grateful if all members of teaching staff have the opportunity to complete this short questionnaire. This is important because high response rates give more valid results.

Ideally, this questionnaire can be completed at the beginning of a whole school staff meeting or INSET session (questionnaires are short and take approximately 5 minutes to complete).

However, if this is not possible questionnaires can be placed in pigeonholes and returned to a central collection box/ envelope when completed. Experience suggests the box is best located next to pigeonholes or if this is not possible in the school office.

A member of the research team will collect the completed questionnaires on the **Wednesday June 4**.

Once again thanks for your co-operation with this survey and we look forward to sharing the results with you.

With best wishes

Christopher Chapman
Lecturer in Educational Intervention
and Improvement

For further information please do not hesitate to contact chris.chapman@warwick.ac.uk

If possible please display this notice on a staff room notice board

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

ABOUT MYSELF (Please tick appropriate box)

Gender: Female ☐ Male ☐

Main subject area: Core (Eng/Ma/Sc) ☐ Non-core ☐

Which of the following best describes your position within the school?

Senior management ☐ Advanced Skills Teacher ☐
Middle management ☐ Classroom teacher ☐
Newly qualified ☐

Years in teaching: 0-3 ☐ 8-15 ☐
4-7 ☐ 16-30 ☐
30+ ☐

Type of contract: Permanent ☐ Temporary ☐

Years at this school: 0-1 ☐ 7-10 ☐
2-3 ☐ 11-15 ☐
4-6 ☐ 16-24 ☐
25+ ☐

If I apply for a new post it will be in a similar type of school
Yes ☐ No ☐

I intend to apply for a new post within twelve months
Yes ☐ No ☐

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE
PLEASE RETURN IT TO THE AGREED COLLECTION POINT

For further information about this project please contact:
Christopher Chapman
Institute of Education
University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL
Tel: 02476 522838
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A STUDY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS IN
SCHOOLS FACING CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES

The Leadership, Policy and Development Unit at the Institute of Education, University of Warwick is conducting an in-depth study of teachers' perceptions of external interventions introduced by central government in schools that have been identified as 'facing challenging circumstances' (SfCC) by the Department for Education and Skills. We would be very grateful if you would take the time to complete this short survey.

All information will be treated as strictly confidential
No schools or individuals will be identified and only overall results will be reported

Please circle the number that best indicates your view of the following statements:
1= strongly disagree (SD), 2= disagree, 3= neutral (N), 4= agree, 5= strongly agree (SA)

A	EXTERNAL INTERVENTION IN SFCC	SD		N		SA
1.	Central government interventions have contributed to raising standards in my school	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The number of government interventions that this school is involved in hinders our internal improvement efforts	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Government interventions have improved The quality of learning in this school	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The LEA provides effective support for government interventions	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Please rank each of the following interventions (only those your school has been involved with) in order of their contribution to school improvement (1=mos impact /5= least impact)	Excellence in Cities OfSTED inspection Education Action Zones Nat Literacy Strategy SfCC Initiative Nat Numeracy Strategy Other (please name) _____				
6.	Some of the challenges faced by SFCC cannot be influenced by external interventions	1	2	3	4	5

CODE ____

		SD		N		SA
7.	<i>Multiple interventions can often compete for time and resource in schools</i>	1	2	3	4	5
8.	<i>External interventions can be counter productive and demotivate staff</i>	1	2	3	4	5
9.	<i>SfCC need differentiated strategies for improvement</i>	1	2	3	4	5
10.	<i>To be successful, external interventions must focus on a multi-agency approach</i>	1	2	3	4	5
11.	<i>External agencies lack the understanding of our school context necessary to provide effective support for improvement</i>	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle the number that best indicates your view of the following statements:
1= strongly disagree (SD), 2= disagree, 3= neutral (N), 4= agree, 5= strongly agree (SA)

B.	SfCC INITIATIVE	SD		N		SA
12.	<i>The school has not benefited by being part of the SfCC initiative</i>	1	2	3	4	5
13.	<i>I have not changed my teaching practice as a result of the SfCC initiative</i>	1	2	3	4	5
14.	<i>The HMI monitoring visits were conducted in a supportive manner</i>	1	2	3	4	5
15.	<i>The initiative has not influenced the planning process within the school</i>	1	2	3	4	5
16.	<i>The LEA has not provided effective support for this initiative</i>	1	2	3	4	5
17.	<i>I found the HMI visits a threatening experience</i>	1	2	3	4	5
18.	<i>SfCC HMI monitoring visits have supported the improvement process in this school</i>	1	2	3	4	5

19.	<i>The sharing of good practice in my school has increased as a result of being part of the SfCC initiative</i>	1	2	3	4	5
20.	<i>The school benefited from involvement in external networks as a result of SfCC</i>	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle the number that best indicates your view of the following statements:
1= strongly disagree (SD), 2= disagree, 3= neutral (N), 4= agree, 5= strongly agree (SA)

C.	OfSTED INSPECTION	SD		N		SA
21.	<i>OfSTED inspection is an effective tool for school improvement</i>	1	2	3	4	5
22.	<i>Being labeled as requiring 'special measures' or 'serious weakness' is detrimental to the recovery of schools in these categories</i>	1	2	3	4	5
23.	<i>The additional stress and workload created by an OfSTED inspection is justified by its contribution to school improvement</i>	1	2	3	4	5
24.	<i>Preparation of staff for the inspection week by the school leadership team influenced inspection outcomes</i>	1	2	3	4	5
25.	<i>Inspection teams vary in quality, this can negatively influence inspection outcomes</i>	1	2	3	4	5
26.	<i>Inspection pressure has negatively affected my professional work</i>	1	2	3	4	5
27.	<i>I have changed my teaching practice as a result of an OfSTED inspection</i>	1	2	3	4	5
28.	<i>I have changed non-teaching aspects of my practice as a result of OfSTED inspection</i>	1	2	3	4	5
29.	<i>Feedback received from inspectors has informed my practice</i>	1	2	3	4	5
30.	<i>Changes to the inspection framework have improved the inspection process</i>	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 7.1: DfES Meeting Evaluation

Initial analysis of Feedback sheets – Seminars on Raising Attainment.

Objectives:

- To enable participants to gain a clear understanding of the aims of the initiative to raise attainment in secondary schools facing Challenging Circumstances.
- To let participants know the criteria for additional funding.
- To understand the roles of LEAs, HMI, SEU and Universities.
- To be aware of different strategies that could be used to raise attainment.
- To know what research literature exists to identify strategies that work.

No of attendees: 550

No of completed evaluations so far: 135 (24.5%)

57 delegates felt that one or more objective had not been met.
6 delegates felt that all objectives had been fully met.

Sound bites

"I was well and truly cheesed off with colleagues in EiC/EAZ whinging about funding. The big positive in this programme for me is the recognition that schools like mine need extra resources to make things happen....."

"I'm not sure whether or not LEAs' views are welcomed - we have a great deal to offer in relation to all sorts of school improvement, but I feel we are treated like the (invisible) difficult pupil in the class!."

"Valuable. It was an excellent opportunity to learn about other strategies. It was also useful to be appraised of central policy."

"The materials are very useful"

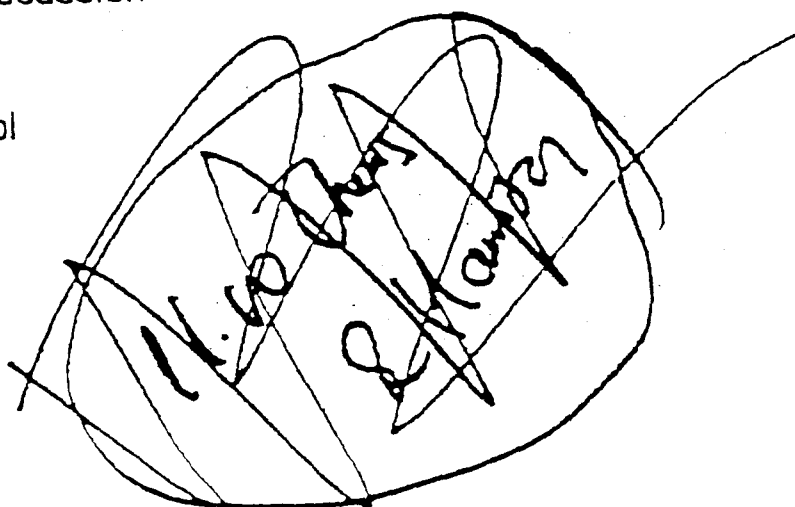
"On it's own much of this strategy is very helpful and useful. The concentration on middle management is crucial. Collaboration and networking in a planned way is an excellent strategy also."

Most useful part:

- | | |
|----|---|
| 37 | Overview of research |
| 36 | Experiences of Pilot Heads |
| 23 | Factual information on support package and RAPs |
| 7 | Opportunity for networking and discussion |
| 9 | School Improvement handbook |
| 7 | All of it |
| 5 | not at all useful/better off at school |

Format

Here's to us!



70 felt that the format was appropriate compared with 66 who said no. The biggest complaints were lack of a break and not enough time for discussion/audience input.

Environment clearly matters – plenty of complaints of too cold/too hot/too draughty!

Issues/comments

- Longer term funding linked to lifetime of SDP
- More work with LEAs
- Keep being supportive and recognising the good work being done
- Extra INSET days for sfcc
- More consultation with heads
- Avoid patronising
- More research on what works and organised training
- Events for teachers
- Acknowledgement of Value Added
- Website with best practice
- More needed on recruitment and retention
- Need to address community regeneration issues.

Future Meetings

90 want more meetings – with more case studies from the chalk face, with group discussions and plenty of time for networking. Specific topics suggested include:

- The pupil's perspective
- Relationship of the LEA/school
- Special measures
- Teambuilding
- Practical help in establishing and maintaining partnerships
- Working with other agencies
- Changing pupils' attitudes to learning
- Classroom practice for raising attainment

Appendix 8.1: Characteristics of schools involved in the survey

Appendix 8.1: School characteristics (2001): Phase 3

School	Total pupils	% FSM	% SEN	% EAL	5+ A-C 1998	5+ A-C 1999	5+ A-C 2000	Unitary LEA/ School location
I	509	30	35	2	22	13	18	Urban
II	555	35	34	26	16	25	23	Urban
III	1008	32	25	30	22	26	22	Urban
IV	771	32	51	24	20	13	18	Urban
V	873	48	31	65	28	35	24	Inner city
VI	700	31	25	2	18	23	13	Urban